Final Results Report

Food Security for Flood-affected Populations in Odisha

Reporting Period: April 1, 2015 – June 30, 2015

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

Cash for Work Beneficiaries Plant Seedlings on Plantation

Beneficiaries Show their Registration Cards (Dobati village, Nilagiri)

Project Summary
Award No: AID-FFP-G-14-00016 Start Date: April 1, 2014 End Date: June 30, 2015 Report Date: September 28, 2015 Total Award: $1,457,761

Acronyms

AWW	Anganawadi Worker
BDO	Block Development Officer
CfW	Cash for Work
ER	Expected Result
FCS	Food Consumption Score
GP	Gram Panchayat
HH	Household
HR	Human Resource
IAG	Inter Agency Group
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Scheme
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
INR	Indian Rupee
IYCF	Infant and Young Chid Feeding
MGNREGA	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employement Guarantee Scheme
OVI	Objectively Verifyable Indicator
NGO	Non Government Organization
PLW	Pregnant and Lactating Women
PRI	Panchayati Raj Institution
RDA	Recommended Dietary Allowance
ST	Scheduled Tribe
UNDP	United Nation Development Program
UCT	Unconditional Cash Transfer
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VC	Village Committee

The 15-month recovery project, "**Food Security for Flood-affected Populations in Odisha"** was funded by USAID as a response to the devastation caused by Cyclone Phailin in October 2013. Implemented by Mercy Corps in partnership with local NGO, Adhikar, the program reached 44 flood-affected villages in Balasore and Maurbhanj districts improving the population's food security status from April 2014 until June 2015. In collaboration with the local elected authorities (Gram Panchayat), community leaders, government line departments, block development offices, district administration and other agencies, **the project adopted an integrated approach that provided Cash for Work (CfW) for 3,345 households and unconditional cash grants (UCG) for 306 most vulnerable and affected households (HH) in the targeted areas, ultimately reaching over 20,000 beneficiaries.** Each household received about 3000 INR to 3500 INR per month covering their food and other emergency needs. This approach, combined with the formation and support of the Village Committee (VC), fostered community leadership and increased management capacity within the affected communities. The VC's helped increase the communities' awareness and behavioral changes with regard to nutrition and key family practices. Monitoring and surveys reported that **beneficiaries' food consumption increased and nutrition status improved through the program's community mobilization efforts** to council beneficiaries on the best practices on food consumption. Under the CfW component, **126 community infrastructure sites were constructed or rehabilitated** in the villages. These structures will provide long term livelihood benefits as well as reduce the likelihood of destruction from future flooding.

Overall, the program strengthened the communities' ability to survive the lean period following the cyclone preventing further degradation of livelihood strategies for the targeted communities, while also allowing the local economy to recover from the floods.

Project Background

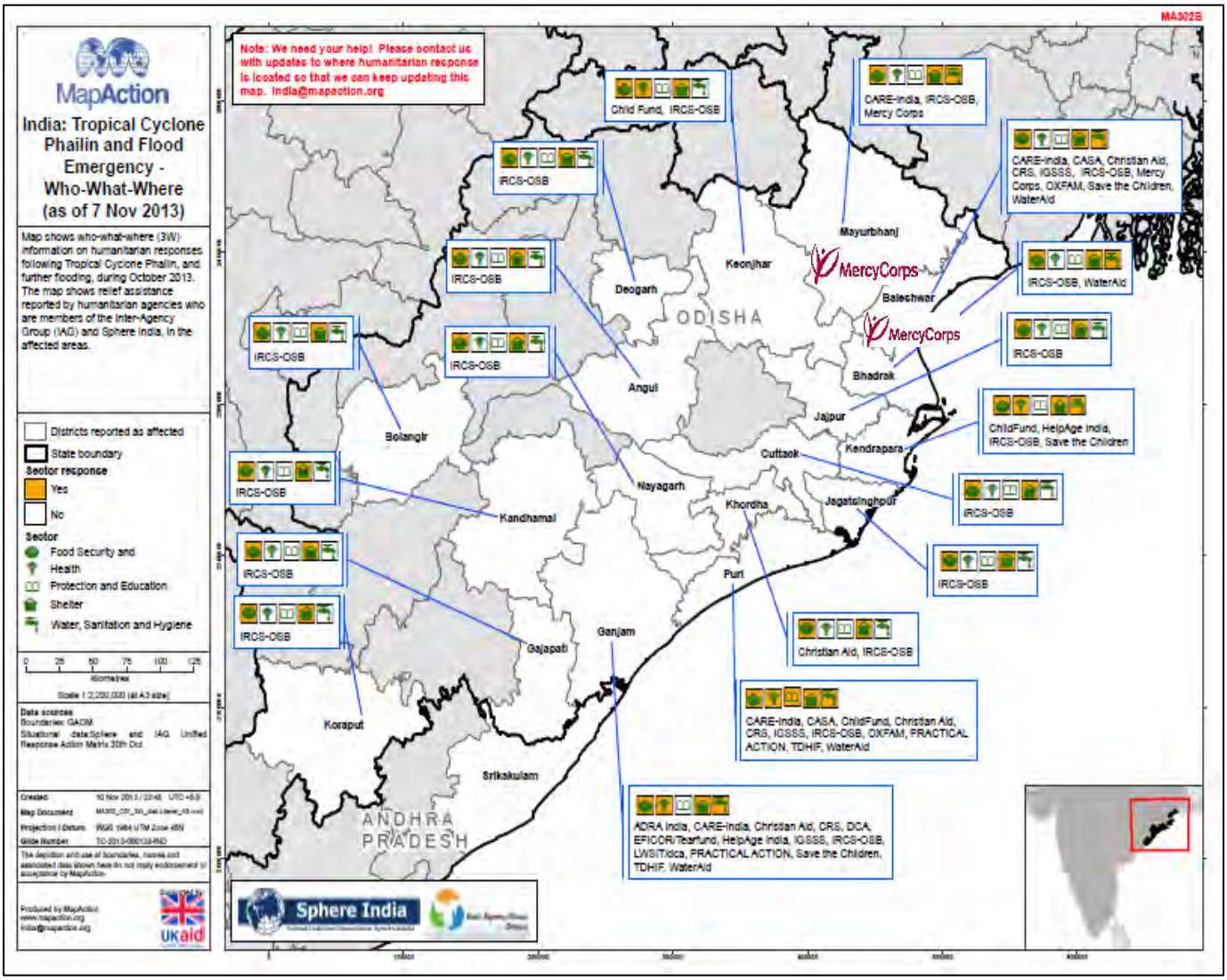
Tropical Cyclone Phailin (Cyclone Level 4 as per Indian Meteorological Department) made landfall in the heavily populated coast of Odisha on 12th October, 2013 with terrifying winds with a speed of 200-210 km/hr. The storm surged up to a height of three meters with heavy rains that led to severe flooding. The estimated loss of property was reported at around 800 million Indian Rupees (13.34 million USD). About 12 million people were affected, 420,000 houses were damaged and about 700,000 hectare of farm lands destroyed.

After initial consultation with the Inter Agency Groups (IAG) of Odisha, district government representatives and humanitarian agencies, including Mercy Corps and partners, deployed teams in Baleswar and Mayurbhanj to assess the situation. Extensive damage was reported to shelter, agricultural and horticultural crops, livestock, fishing boats and nets, public infrastructures, transport, and communication systems. For these areas, normal life was disrupted, few livelihood options were available and public health risks increased resulting from contaminated water and damaged sanitation facilities. This was a devastating blow to a state with the highest percentage of people living below the poverty line (57.2%) of any state in India, with 80% of the population residing in rural areas dependent on incomes derived from seasonal wage labor mainly from farms.

Nilagiri Block of Baleswar, Badasahi and GB Nagar Development Blocks[1] of Mayurbhanj district were among the most affected. The resultant loss of crops led to acute food insecurity for affected families. Assessments informed that there was a food gap and dietary diversity was reduced due to the loss of livelihoods, damage to crops and delays in government relief provisions. The quality and quantity of food intake was significantly reduced potentially impacting children as well as pregnant and lactating mothers' nutrition. Post disaster coping mechanisms included: borrowing from neighbors and grocery shops, labor work, reduced intake of food, and utilizing savings. The majority of women reported no change in breastfeeding practices though the number of feeding times was reduced.

[1] Block is a basic administrative unit of the Government

Based on the assessment and gap analyses, following an initial rapid response, Mercy Corps initiated a one year flood recovery program targeting the poor and the most vulnerable households in the district of Baleswar and Mayurbhanj beginning in April 2014.



Program Implementation

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

The cash transfer strategy was broadly divided into two parts:

- **ER 1.1** Cash for Work for **3,200** households (**total reached: 3,345 households**)
- **ER 1.2** Unconditional cash transfers for **300** most vulnerable households (**total reached: 306 households**)

The implementation of these strategies is described below:

Expected Result 1.1: Conditional Cash Transfer (3,200 households)

The program will focus on Cash-for-Work (CfW) for at least 3,200 households (HHs) to weather the next agricultural cycle and support the rehabilitation of infrastructure (such as market places, irrigation canals and water harvesting structures, village roads, village markets, and clearing heavily silted areas).

Objectively Verifiable Indicators (OVIs) for this result are as follows:
ER 1.1.1 # of households participating in CfW and receiving CfW payments
Target: 3,200/Reached: 3,345
ER 1.1.2 # of community infrastructure sites rehabilitated
Target: 60/Reached: 126
ER 1.1.3 % of cash received used for food purchases and for livelihoods recovery
Target: 80%/Reached: 76%

Over the life of the program, **3,345 households participated in cash for work activities.** Each household received an average of 78 days of wages, receiving 165 INR per day, totalling 12,870 INR (222 USD) per beneficiary household. Although the initial plan was to provide 80 days of work per beneficiary household, the work days for each household was not uniform during the project implementation. Beneficiary household CfW days varied between the range of 70 days to 88 days. This was due to the absence of some households during implementation and the migration of participants to other places for seasonal jobs/activities. In total, there were 252,624 work days and a total of INR 41,682,960 (approx. USD718, 672) transferred to the beneficiaries' accounts.

A total of 97% of the CfW funds were transferred to beneficiaries' bank accounts following the completion of all infrastructure projects.[2] A total of **126 large community infrastructure sites were rehabilitated or constructed** and 53 support structures were completed to strengthen the infrastructure with additional material support. Overall, the majority of planned CfW activities were carried out.

According to Final Expenditure Survey, **76% of the cash received was used for food purchases and for livelihoods recovery**. The remaining 24% was used to purchase livestock, clothes, medicine, children's education expenses and some amount was kept as savings. Although the program did not meet the established target, Mercy Corps understood that cash provides beneficiaries the opportunity to spend the cash on their own specific needs. Some beneficiaries reported expenses on non-food items, like investments, that were made in order to strengthen their future income generating ability. Although not considered a food or livelihood purchase, these types of expenditures were in line with the program's objective to improve food security.

The total number of targeted beneficiaries and achieved outcomes were larger than what was proposed initially. Additional complementary activities were implemented to improve awareness on key nutrition aspects and practices. The program put in place an Information, Education and Communication (IEC) strategy that combined continuous awareness activities at the work sites and community meetings at the household level aimed at instilling appropriate purchasing behaviors. These were aimed at promoting sound expenditure choices in terms of beneficiaries' food security, health and livelihood improvements. Moreover, specific nutrition training and awareness sessions were

[2] During the program, some beneficiaries left the targeted villages to look for other work, which is why Mercy Corps only reached 97%.

also conducted at the work sites. This was done in order to increase awareness on key nutrition information on available food types, as well as on key family practices such as hygiene and nutritious food preparations, breastfeeding, Infant Young Child Feeding (IYCF), and healthy behaviors for pregnant and lactating women.

Key Activities for Expected Result 1.1:

Identification and Selection of Households:

The following was the selection criteria for participating households:

- Households affected by the post-Phailin floods in the following ways: temporarily displaced, loss of shelter, loss of standing crop, loss of household utilities and assets
- No regular livelihood source assuring stable income
- Poor financial conditions leading to compromises on food intake both in terms of quality and quantity

Rapport Building with the Community, Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) Members, Local Administration, and Community Leaders:

To initiate the cash for work activities, the community rapport building exercises were undertaken with the villagers devastated by the floods. The program objectives were discussed in detail in the affected villages and support was sought to implement the planned activities. Village committees were formed in each of the selected villages with active participation from the affected households. Each committee comprised of seven members including both men and women (a minimum of two women members were mandatory). Similarly, the Panchayat Raj Institution (PRI – a local governance structure for a cluster of five villages) members were invited to participate. These members included the ward members, Sarpanchs[3], the block chairperson and district head of Pancahayat (i.e. the Zilla Parishad). They were briefed in detail about the program activities and the role of PRI and the local administration in supporting the activities and mobilizing the affected communities. As a result of this activity, the district collector and magistrate (administrative head of the district) assured the program of his administrative support from his district.

Identification of Infrastructure Projects in Consultation with Community:

Following the rapport building exercises to establish positive relationships with the community, Mercy Corps completed the preliminary identification and planning of community assets to rehabilitate or improve under the cash for work activities. The views and perceptions of the community leaders in selecting the important structures that were likely to be the most beneficial to the community were given priority (e.g. a village approach road was selected because it aided communication between villages and linked the community to the market and agricultural fields). Also, projects that could provide long term livelihood benefits, such as diversion based irrigation, check dams, embankments etc., were given priority. In order to increase the resilience of the community, the project included the building of support structures to reduce the risk of destruction due to small scale flooding.

Structural Plans for Community Assets with Support from Technical Consultants:

The layout for each identified infrastructure project was planned with the help of technical experts with a civil engineering background. These experts visited each site, consulted with the community and designed the layout for each structure. They prepared an estimate for each site which included the

[3]A Sarpanch is the elected member of the Gram Panchayat. The Parnchayati Raj Institute is a three-tier system in the state with elected bodies at the village, taluk and district levels. It ensures greater participation of people and more effective implementation of rural development programs.

dimensions, human working days needed and the materials required to improve the durability and fucnctionality of each site. Preference was given to simple structures that required earthwork in order to accomodate the participation of the majority of participants. A total of **32 large infrastructure** designs were prepared estimating that it would take more than 3,000 human days to complete. Similarly, **94 smaller infrastructure** plans were prepared estimating that it would take less than 3,000 human days to complete.[4] There were a total of 126 infrastructure projects.

Number of Work Days per Month:
The CfW activities in the village were planned to ensure that they did not overlap with other wage labor opportunities - such as government infrastructure projects or local agriculture work. Household participation in the CfW activities was planned in such a way that each household received payment for 20 days of work each month. This ensured that the payments were sufficient to address each household's immediate food needs and to help tide families over during lean periods. This approach helped spread the support over a longer period of time which was helpful in ensuring household food security and recovery from the flood damages.

Support Services fora Better Work Environment:
Basic necessities to reduce hardships and provide an encouraging work atmosphere were arranged at each of the work sites. For example, the program used tarpaulins to provide a place for shade and rest as well as drinking water and glasses. A set of toys and biscuits were provided for the children of the working women. To ensure that elderly women could participate as well, they were given responsibilities more suitable for their conditions such as providing water to the beneficiaries and providing childcare.

Tool Kits to Facilitate Effective Work Progress:
Support services were provided to the community including: a toolkit for CfW (basket and hoe) to participating households and additional tools (crowbar, spade and pick axe) to facilitate earthwork projects. These tools helped the beneficiaries complete the earthwork projects faster and with less hardship. The tools also made it more effective to work with the hard soil and to transfer of soil from one place to another and they were handed over to the beneficiaries upon completion of their work.

CfW Payments through Bank Accounts (Financial Inclusion Component):
During the initial phase of the program, 60% of participating households had bank accounts and the project staff encouraged beneficiary households to receive the payments through their accounts. However, this was initially a challenge for those households who did not have an account. Gradually, accounts were opened for all beneficiary HHs in the first quarter.

Bank accounts were deemed appropriate both for **transparency and traceability** purposes and because the availability of banks in the area was deemed sufficient to allow beneficiaries access to banking services. Those selected beneficiaries who did not have a bank account were supported by project staff and village committees to open one.[5] Around 40% of beneficiaries opened bank accounts during the project implementation. Overall, the project facilitated the opening of new bank accounts in

[4] Because large individual projects could not provide the full 80 days of work for each HH, smaller projects were identified by the communities to provide the necessary human working days needed for the participating HH. This is why the program well exceeded the target of 60 infrastructure projects for ER 1.1.2.

[5] A member of the staff was available to physically accompany beneficiaries to the bank to support them in this process.

the following areas: 350 HHs in Nilagiri, 325 HHs in Sialighti and 250 beneficiaries were assisted HHs in Durgapur cluster

However, working with banks, especially in a remote and rural area, was a challenge. Transfers were delayed during the initial phase because the bank branch was unable to manage large numbers of cash transactions due to the lack of human resources in their small village branches. In most cases, rural bank branches do not have sufficient staff to handle such a large quantity of transactions. To speed up the process, bank accounts were opened in four additional branches in the project areas to distribute the work load. The main branch at Bhubaneswar was approached to wire the money to individual accounts as they have the necessary software to make the transfer faster and without manual entry. As a result, this solved the issue of late transfers and moving forward the beneficiaries could receive their payments within five to seven days.

Examples of Multiple Uses and Benefits for the Implemented Infrastructures Projects *(for additional information see the Final Evaluation Report):*

Ponds: The rehabilitated ponds enhanced beneficiaries' opportunities to access water for bathing, domestic uses, land irrigation, and fish farming.

Connecting Roads (raised, drainage facilities): These projects improved the mobility of targeted communities; enhanced their capacity to escape from next floods as well as protect livestock and goods. Improved village approach/connecting roads resulted in enhanced opportunities for income generating activities by allowing the easier passage of tractors and the access of agricultural inputs, ultimately leading to improved yielding capacities.

Flood Shelters (Raised Earthen Platforms): These projects improved the resilience of communities against floods and enhanced opportunities for local market creation and community gathering.

Tree Plantations: Trees limit flood-induced erosion and in the long term provides a source of income. Apart from timber producing trees and trees for firewood, beneficiaries planted fruits trees such as mangos.

Irrigation Systems: Enhanced land irrigation results in wider yielding capacity and enhanced opportunities of income generation from crops. Plans to irrigate common lands for common kitchen gardens aimed at fostering food security and/or the availability of community revenues were reported.

Expected Result 1.2: Unconditional Cash Grant to Most Vulnerable Households (300 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.

Objectively Verifiable Indicators for this Result are as follows:

ER 1.2.1 # of most vulnerable households receiving cash grants for food

Target: 300/Reached: 306

ER 1.2.2 % of cash transferred used for food purchases

Target: 90%/Reached: 76%

During the program, **a total of 198 women and 108 men (306 in total) received unconditional cash transfers**. Each household received cash in three to five tranches (depending on the availability of funds). Each tranche was calculated at 3,050 INR and was determined based on the total amount necessary to cover monthly food expenditures and emergency expenses. Cash was brought directly to those most vulnerable beneficiaries to avoid any inconvenience for them. In total, 2,713,918 INR (46,792 USD) was disbursed as unconditional cash grants. The UCT instalments that were not completed was due to the fund transfer restrictions that occurred in early 2015.[6]

According to the final expenditure surveys, **76% of the total cash transferred was used to purchase food.** The utilization of cash on other purchases or activities is explained below.

Key Activities for Expected Result 1.2

Selection of Households:

A total of 306 of the most vulnerable households who did not have regular wage-earning family members were identified for the unconditional cash transfer program. Based on the average household's need for food, 3,048 INR was established as the fixed monthly payment (later on this was changed to 3,050 INR). Households with elderly, widows, critically ill, and disabled family members were given priority during the selection process. Identification of UCT beneficiaries was carefully implemented with the active support of Sarpanches, village committees and village members and finally cross-checked and verified through physical inspection and direct interviews by the financial and admin program staff by visiting beneficiary households.

Disbursement of Cash:

UCT instalments were provided directly in cash as the majority of UCT beneficiaries had physical challenges preventing them from directly accessing banks. As an adaptive measure, a gathering point for all UCT beneficiaries in the villages was agreed on. Unfortunately, not all UCT instalments were completed due to the difficulties receiving funds related to the government's notice regarding the transfer of foreign funds to India from Mercy Corps (see footnote 6). Staff tried to keep the transfer dates of UCT disbursements as uniform as possible in order to prevent resentment among beneficiaries. However, this was not always possible because such a large amount of cash disbursed could not always be carried out simultaneously in different villages. Also, disbursements of UCT grants had to wait for the CfW activities to start in the target villages in order to minimize resentment of the CfW beneficiaries toward the UCT beneficiaries. This explains the different number of instalments received by UCT in the different clusters. Moreover, UCTs were made in cash and this required the presence of key staff from Bhubanswar, as well as careful planning to minimize security challenges. Some UCT beneficiaries could not reach the disbursement point as they were not able to walk and staff had to reach them directly in their house/place of living.

Support to Purchase Non-Perishable Food Items:

The project staff, with support from the village committee members, escorted beneficiaries to the local markets to purchase food items, medicines, etc. This ensured the proper usage of the cash received and helped the elderly in their purchasing activities. In some cases, someone such as a close relative or a

[6] All project activities in the field were temporarily suspended on 18th of January after Mercy Corps learned about the Government of India's prior permission notice, preventing Mercy Corps from making payments under this project and obstructing the flow of funds to the partner agency, Adhikar. As a result, the program could only disburse 59% of the total budgeted amount for UCT. For more information, see the "Challenges" section in this report pg. 16.

neighbor bought the items from the market for houses where beneficiaries were too old and weak to leave their households.

Monitoring of Cash Utilization by the Beneficiary Households

Although the program did not achieve its target of 80%, 56% of purchased were spent on food items and the remainder of purchases were reportedly for health, clothes, shelter and education expenses for their children. Some cash was spent on loan repayments and no significant purchases were used on entertainment, alcohol/tobacco, or agricultural inputs (as per the nutrition survey). Some UCT beneficiaries used the funds to investment in productive options and were informally encouraged by program staff ensuring that the most vulnerable beneficiaries had access to income generating activities. Examples of this include small livestock investments and small informal market business. These sporadic income-generating initiatives fostered positive perspectives from the beneficiaries with regard to their future earning opportunities. However, the majority of beneficiaries spent the entire UCT money to meet their food and health needs.

Nutrition Improvements

As part of the program, community mobilizers were trained by a food and nutrition expert to organize meetings, trainings and discussions in the community in order to counsel beneficiaries on the best practices in food consumption. The program encouraged communities to purchase food items that will provide nutritional sufficiency and diversity. The strategy was to identify locally available food to create a balanced diet. Critical gaps in food intake were identified by comparing their food consumption to the standard recommended dietary allowance 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 were to help participants understand the effects of poor nutrition on their general health and the ability of their immune system to fight off illness. It also provided solutions for better nutrition based on locally available and affordable food. Participatory exercises like Q&A sessions, simulation exercises and role plays were incorporated into the training design to encourage the trainees to actively participate and learn about nutrition.

These initiatives, coupled with the cash transfers, helped the beneficiaries make the right choices to optimize their utilization of nutritious food, identify locally available nutritious food and learn about correct food preparation practices. Additional follow up might be required to strengthen and widen observed awareness achievements and further improve awareness and capacities with regard to horticulture/kitchen garden activities.

Findings from the evaluation show that "*Nutrition training and awareness activities successfully achieved impressive results. They were grounded on preliminary attentive studies of targeted communities through direct and secondary information sources in order to develop tailored training sessions and support materials. The participatory facilitation and the chosen settings probably also contributed to the effectiveness of these activities.*"

Exit Activities

Since the project was a one-year, short-term flood recovery program, it was important to find ways for further sustainability efforts. During implementation, the program staff shared the progress of the activities with PRI and the district administration. This was a strategy to ensure the engagement of local officials throughout the life of the program as well as for future community initiated projects.

Continued maintenance of the infrastructure created through the project is critical for their utility in the long run. To help ensure their maintenance, handover meetings were organized in each operational village to inform communities of the project closure and who to contact in absence of the project staff. The committee in each village, along with the active participation of households, have assumed responsibility for the structures' upkeep. Additional materials were provided to improve the durability and functionality of the infrastructure. Due to the fund transfer issues and delays (see footnote 6), additional work to strengthen some infrastructure projects could not be completed. This issue was discussed with the committee, local government and the district officials during the phase-out meetings and the committee and district administration agreed to seriously look into this and add their efforts to the unfinished work.

Towards the end of the program, a sharing and convergence workshop was organized and attended by the district administration, block officials, Panchayat Raj Institution representatives, officials from line departments (such as forestry, soil conservation, fishery, horticulture, agriculture departments) and representatives from the beneficiary groups. As a result of the workshop, strong linkages were established between the village committees and line department officials. There was a breakthrough in arranging resources for further improvement projects and the utilization of created community assets. It is expected that the community will be able to mobilize funds from different government departments to add value the program's projects and maintain them in the future.

The program's strategy of creating and supporting village committees was an important factor contributing to the sustainability of the achieved results. Instances of ongoing fund-raising attempts by communities were reported by some of the consulted village committees (see Final Evaluation Report). However, the involvement and capacity of these village committees vary village to village; therefore additional capacity building activities are required to strengthen the capacities and experiences of those village committees.

Overview of Project Outcome (As Reported in the Final Evaluation Report)

Beneficiaries' awareness of and satisfaction for the program and its achievements were remarkable. In fact, all consulted stakeholders and beneficiaries deemed the program's action essential because it:

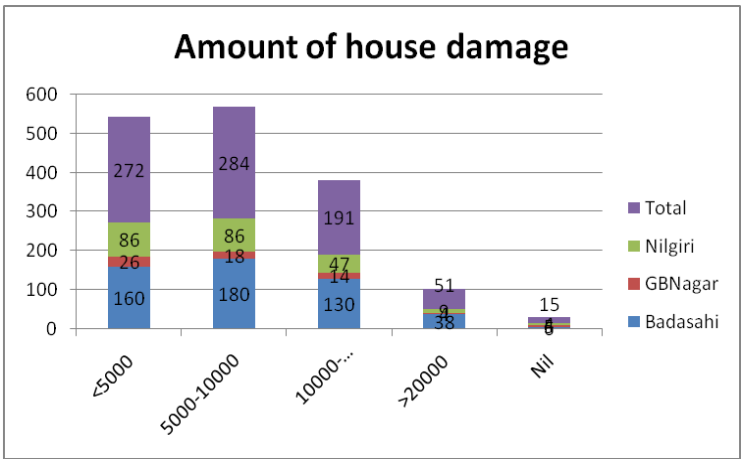
- Improved targeted populations' access to income.
- Strengthened and rehabilitated key community infrastructure and facilitated the identification of priority key community infrastructure with a particular attention to their perspective impact;
- Instilled the most appropriate expenditure behaviors of beneficiaries' cash for food purchases and for livelihoods recovery.
- Implemented successful participatory and community mobilization strategies to identify those most vulnerable households to be targeted with cash grants.
- Fostered appropriate follow-up and ad hoc individual awareness creation to facilitate adequate UCT beneficiary expenditures aimed at responding to their health and nutrition needs, besides some priority livelihood needs (in some instances for shelter, HH items, and small investments).
- Allowed and improved beneficiaries' access to nutritious food adequate to their physiological characteristic and conditions.
- Fostered communities' health improvement and confidence building.
- Allowed beneficiaries to invest in children's education when their resources could not have allowed it.
- Responded to urgent needs in a timely manner despite observed and reported delays and ultimately contributed to improved food security of 3,636 households in flood affected villages of Mayurbhanj and Baleswar districts of Odisha.

Monitoring and Evaluation

In order to monitor and compare progress against indicators and expected results, the program used a variety of surveys methods. Four different surveys were conducted within the framework of this program: a baseline survey was conducted in August 2014, a food consumption survey was conducted in October 2014, an expenditure survey was conducted in November 2014, and a final nutrition/nutrition monitoring survey was conducted in December 2014. An external final evaluation was done through an independent consultant in June 2015 to understand the project impact.

Baseline Survey

At the end of August 2014, a baseline survey was administered in 543 villages in Badasahi and G.B. Nagar development block of Mayurbhanj district and Nilagiri block of Baleswar district in order to assess the status of the beneficiaries related to food consumption, income-expenditures and availability of livelihood options. A total of 813 HHs were surveyed (24.6% of the total HHs targeted by the project). The baseline assessed key components addressed by the project: land use pattern, extent of damage and restoration, food insecurity, food coping mechanisms and community infrastructure damaged during floods. The baseline also aimed at collecting key information on household income and expenditure patterns.



Data on food consumption was collected and analysed following the Food Consumption Score (FCS) methodology. The main results are as follows:

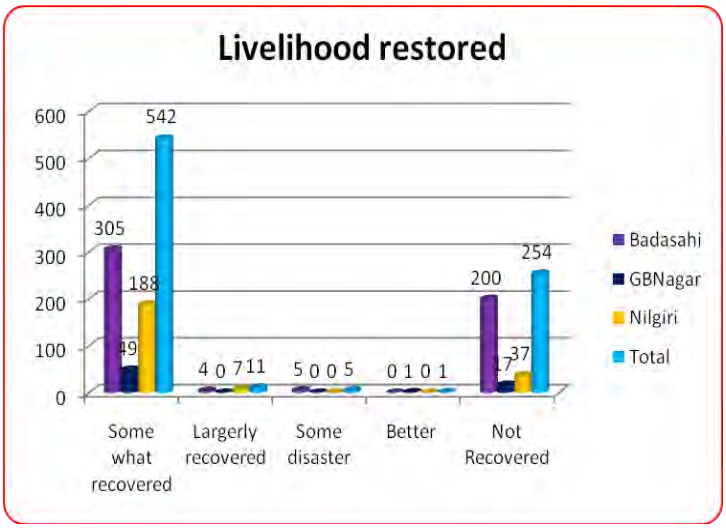
- 40% of the respondents held land that was less than 0.5 acres, while 29% of the respondents were considered landless.
- About 70% of the respondents were involved in paddy cultivation, while few farmers (0.4%) were involved in pulses and vegetable (1.2%) cultivation.
- 35% of the respondents incurred house damages of about 5,000 INR to 10,000 INR while 33% had incurred losses of less than 5,000 INR.
- 37% lost standing crops of less than 5,000 INR, while 29% of respondents incurred losses ranging from 5000-10,000 INR. 26% did not incur a loss of crops as they presumably had no land at all.
- 40% of respondents reported that they lost their stocked food items (mainly paddy). The reported value of these losses ranged from 1,000-2,000 INR. About 30% of respondents reported lost food items worth 1,000 INR.
- Household Assets: 40% households reported loss of assets like utensils, beddings, etc.
- Livelihoods: A total of 31% of HH did not return to their livelihoods, whereas 67% HH only

recovered partially.

- Standing Crops: 29% of HH lost their standing crops with an estimated value of 5,000 INR to 10,000 INR. A total of 37% HH lost anywhere between 3,000 INR to 5,000 INR.

The main findings confirmed that households applied *short-term negative food consumption coping strategies* (low frequency and low quantity of different food types) to cope with food shortages. Brief details are presented as follows:

- 93% respondent reported they reduced the number of meals and quantity of food per day as a coping mechanism to tackle food shortages.
- 91% ate less expensive and less preferred food. About 76% ate less so that children could eat.
- 60% borrowed from family/friends to buy food and 18% of respondents declared they sold household assets.
- An overwhelming 90% reported they had not pulled children out of school.
- A great majority (91%) of the respondents reported that household members were engaged in more than one job to supplement household's income.



- 72% of the respondents reported they received government aid, which was judged insufficient to cover encountered flood-induced losses. 72% also reported they received some support from other NGOs after the flood. 98% declared they had never resorted to sell aid received from the NGOs after the flood.
- 94% of surveyed households declared they did not migrate in search for work following the flood. 6% declared their household member (s) migrated to other states like Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Kerala & Karnataka.
- About 83% of respondents had bought food on credit from the village grocery shop. 96% of respondents did not send family members to live with others as a coping strategy.
- 94% of respondents declared that they are interested or would be interested in Cash for Work programs. The majority (89%) reported they planned to buy food once they received money through CfW.

The Composite Food Consumption Score (FCS) analysed for the three different blocks (G.B. Nagar, Badasahi and Nilagiri) in the study area indicated that 78.2% of respondents were borderline (FCS-2: 21.5 to 35) while 2% fell into the poor category (FCS-1: 0 to 21) and only 19.7% of surveyed population had an acceptable (FCS-3: i.e. >35) food consumption score. The survey reconfirmed the program's logic that it was clear that the food insecure situation resulted from the losses and devastation induced by floods together with the limits in accessing wage labour. Specific FCS's analysis also revealed that the carbohydrate requirements were fairly met, although a wide insecurity was observed with regard to vegetables, fruits and protein consumption patterns.

Expenditure Survey

The expenditure survey (Food Consumption) was conducted in November 2014 to assess the improvement in food consumption patterns. The major findings of the food consumption survey are as follows:

The expenditure survey indicated that on average, 76% of the money transferred was utilized to purchase food. The expenditures were on important food groups such as cereals (25%), animal protein (21%), and vegetables (20%). Other expenditures included pulses, sugar and oil. The rest of the earnings were spent on the repayment of loans, medicines, household repairs, and education. Field information indicated that the loans were taken primarily to meet the food needs of the family.

Under the "other" food intake category, the survey showed that participants consumed diverse food items. There was an improvement from subsistence food intake to selective food items.

Project staff, with support from the village working committee members, helped purchase non-perishable food items in bulk so that they could be stored over the course of a month. This helped ensure that most of the cash support went towards food and that poor households received a good deal from the market. The nutrition awareness and constant interaction at the village level encouraged the households to consume diverse foods. Many households retained a portion of the cash received in their bank account to utilize at a later time.

Basic Nutrition Survey

The 24 Hours Dietary Recall Method was used to review the current status of food intake in terms of the quality and quantity of foods consumed by households. The women from the selected households were interviewed to find out if there was a change made in the household food consumption pattern. The program used 'Participatory Monitoring' throughout the project period and routinely collected information after the households received their CfW money. Post-training interviews were completed through small groups to understand the knowledge-level of the participants around basic nutritional tips.

Key findings were:

- The consumption of pulses (34.78 gm) per head increased significantly compared to their consumption during the pre-intervention period (16.66 gm).
- There was a 42.82% increase in vegetable consumption.
- Milk and milk products increased by 11.22% and fruit intake increased by 24.72%.
- The consumption of fish/meat/egg/dry fish and other typical foods like snails, crabs, etc. increased by almost double the average amount of intake from 20.62 gm to 39.4 gm

Beneficiary Complaint Mechanism

A complaints mechanism was put in place at the beginning of the project. It had two main components: the first was a complaints box in each targeted village. Every five to seven days the box was opened by a responsible person for a different area. The second component was a dedicated telephone number that beneficiaries could call for complaints. The dedicated phone was managed by the Admin officer in Bhubaneswar at Adhikar's office, who could receive complaints Monday through Friday from 9am to 5pm. However, it was reported that this complaints mechanism was not often used by beneficiaries, who were comfortable to directly confront project staff and village committee members. Nearly all complaints were promptly responded to directly by the Village Committees, by program staff and

management when complaints directly touched their roles and functions. Of course, the complaints that could not be substantiated were tackled appropriately.

Documentation to Record Major Decisions by Stakeholders:
Documents were prepared at the village-level as per compliance norms. The major documents at village level meetings included: meeting minute books, consent letters from the Sarpanch,[7] attendance sheet of participating households, proof of money transferred to individual households, photographic evidence of the infrastructure, and Memorandum of Understandings between the participating village and the project. These documents were maintained at partner level for transparency and for record.

CfW Onsite Supervision:
Village working committees, with active participation from the CfW participants, finalized the ground rules for the worksites. The rules covered: work hours (seven hours per day), break times, the number of participants per supervisor, and a distribution of tasks to each small group. At least one member of the program team visited each worksite daily. S/he took attendance of participants as a means of cross-checking, help sort out issues, if any, supervises the work according to layout and held periodic meetings. The complaints of individuals, groups or the community arose during the village working committee meetings and steps were taken to address them. They were also used to share the program objectives, deliverables and the sustainability of the community assets.

Coordination

Mercy Corps and its partner, Adhikar engaged in regular and active coordination with the local government authorities, Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRI), Inter Agency Groups (IAG) and other humanitarian agencies during the assessment stage and also during project implementation. Updates were shared with the IAG during the initial stage of the response and recovery program. With the support of technical agencies, response and recovery mapping (by all agencies) was completed to understand who was doing what and where and to discover the gaps in response and recovery works (if any). Joint needs assessments were conducted by Mercy Corps and partner along with other agencies and findings were shared with the IAG-Odisha. Village lists and target district names were shared with IAG member agencies for better coordination. The effective coordination helped to cover a larger number of beneficiaries by all different agencies and also brought added value in the form of sharing experiences and information. The maintenance of good relationships with PRI and local authorities facilitated access to implementation areas and permitted the fulfilment of the action's humanitarian imperative.

In order to have a smooth phase out from the operational areas and interventions, a sharing and convergence meetings was organized, which was attended by the district administration, block officials, PRI representatives and officials from line departments like forestry, soil conservation, fishery, horticulture, agriculture departments as well as the representatives of the beneficiary groups. Project achievements and challenges in implementation were discussed in the meetings and relevant authorities were informed regarding additional support requirements from the government.

Challenges

On January 15, 2015 the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) in the Government of India circulated a list of ten donor agencies/INGOs and instructed the Reserve Bank of India to restrict the flow of funds of those on this list. Should any these agencies transfer funds to a bank account in India, the bank was instructed to inform the MHA and only after their clearance, were the funds allowed to be credited to the accounts of the recipient. Unfortunately, Mercy Corps' name was included on this list. This obstructed our flow of funds to the partner agency, Adhikar, and as a result, delayed the activities in the field. Due to transfer problems, ongoing final activities in the field (during a time at which they were scheduled to be at their peak) stopped. In order to complete the liabilities and project deliverables, after reviewing all options, Mercy Corps decided to transfer the remaining funds to Adhikar in small amounts in multiple tranches. The strategy worked, however, the process took additional time to complete. Therefore, Mercy Corps had to reduce the partner budget so that a realistic amount could be transferred to the partner within the extended project time frame.

This allowed the program to accomplish the majority of the operative results. However, this issue led to the incompleteness of UCT disbursements and the completion of only 53 of the targeted 60 support structures required to strengthen some of the CfW infrastructure projects (resulting in a possible limited lifetime). In order to address these shortcomings, local partner, Adhikar, is continuing to work with these communities and is coordinating with the district authorities, Block Development Officer, line departments and PRI to address the needs of this community. They plan to continue this work on their own and coordinate with the local authorities to assist with the communities' overall development.

Conclusions

The **"Food security for flood-affected populations in Odisha"** program promptly responded to the priority needs of the flood-affected populations in Odisha's Baleswar and Mayurbhanj districts. The project prevented further degradation of livelihood strategies for the targeted communities, strengthening their ability to survive the lean period and return to subsistence income levels while the local agricultural economy recovered from the floods. It supported household income generation, fostered households' capacity to meet their food needs, and contributed to the recovery of the local economy through the beneficiaries' enhanced purchasing capacity and improved/rehabilitated community infrastructure.

The program not only successfully reach a wide number of beneficiaries and responded to their urgent needs during the year following the floods, it also initiated and strengthened positive change at the community levels increasing their resilience capacity and improving community and household relations through the joint CfW activities. The rehabilitated key community infrastructure provides long term livelihood benefits as well as reduced the likelihood of destruction from future flooding. The development of the village committees improved community leadership and instilled key family practices contributing to beneficiaries' improved food security, health and livelihood.

Annexes – I: Final Evaluation Report – See attachment

Annex – II: Photos

Photo: Before and after (construction), Sangrapur Village – Nilagiri Block (Baleswar)

Village Market Place: raising (land filling) and construction of superstructure (Badasahi Block, Mayurbhanj)

Flood Shelter Constructed Through CFW

Village Approach Road:

Photo: Village Pond with Concrete Steps Constructed for Easy Access

Photo: Meeting with Beneficiaries

Water Harvesting Structure

Plantation Work

Photo: Project Staff Conducting Baseline Survey in the Villages

Photo: UCT Beneficiaries Holding Their Beneficiary Cards: Dobati village (Nilagiri block)