



Mercy Corps and the Jakarta Flood

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Executive Summary

In late January and February 2002, Indonesia experienced downpours that resulted in massive flooding in multiple areas of Greater Jakarta as well as other regions of the country. Mercy Corps provided assistance to victims of the flood with special funding from USAID/OFDA, rice and other commodities from USAID, and ongoing USDA funding for grants to local NGOs. Feedback from aid beneficiaries revealed that they were generally pleased with the assistance they received, including that from Mercy Corps. They particularly appreciated organizations that had taken the time to understand them and their needs.

Interviews and survey responses illustrate several reasons why Mercy Corps was well placed to respond to an emergency like the flood. Most important, Mercy Corps already had strong partnerships in place before the emergency arose – especially partnerships with the community, NGOs, and donors. This improved effectiveness in several ways. First, prior connections allowed Mercy Corps to start immediately and obviously increased the speed of the flood response. Second, targeting was more precise because Mercy Corps had already established mechanisms for identifying the vulnerable before the disaster struck. Third, the responsiveness of the assistance was better because Mercy Corps and its partners knew the community well enough to deliver aid that was appropriate, and to deliver it in effective ways. Fourth, Mercy Corps dispensed aid with greater accountability when it relied on existing systems and on tested partners that already knew how to follow appropriate procedures.

Finally, any organization can respond better if it has a strategy, skills, and systems in place ahead of time. This area – advance preparation and emergency-response capacity – was perhaps where Mercy Corps was weakest during the Jakarta floods. Here are four ways Mercy Corps might improve its capacity to respond to a similar emergency in the future:

- (1) Assess our institutional strengths, weaknesses, and limitations, and identify the sectoral and geographic areas where we can have the greatest impact,
- (2) develop a coordinating team to take the lead in the event of future disasters or security events,
- (3) build some expertise in urban emergency response through training and staff exchange,
- (4) prepare a strategy for emergencies, especially for flooding before the next rainy season begins.

I. Introduction

A. Case Selection and Purpose

The Jakarta flood of February 2002 was followed by much discussion among the public, in the press, and within the NGO community about what went right, what went wrong, and what should change in the future. The media were generally critical of the government's inaction in various respects: preventing the overdevelopment that exacerbated the flood, preparing for the flood, and providing relief when flooding occurred. Similarly, the public and press circulated stories about local organizations that had misused funds or simply failed to respond effectively.

Mercy Corps also went through some informal self-reflection after the floods about how well it responded and about its own organizational strengths and weaknesses in an emergency. During her visit to Indonesia soon after the floods, Director of Program Operations Kim Johnston also talked with staff about the flood effort and encouraged the Indonesia team to document its experience and the results of any self-evaluation. This paper is part of that internal discussion. The Civil Society Program produced this with input from the Transitional Activity Program and Grants teams, which also produced some operational lessons learned.

This paper is not an evaluation, nor is it a handbook on how to respond to a flood or similar emergency. The objectives of this case study are to:

1. Document Mercy Corps' response to the Jakarta flood,
2. Collect and document beneficiary feedback on the flood efforts of Mercy Corps and other parties,
3. Identify some strengths and weaknesses in Mercy Corps' approach and the organization's relative advantages and disadvantages in providing assistance during a Jakarta emergency,
4. Suggest ways to improve Mercy Corps' response to urban emergencies in the future.

B. Methodology

This case study is based on a field survey of flood-aid beneficiaries in four areas of Jakarta, two focus group discussions with beneficiaries of assistance, interviews with MC staff and others involved in the flood relief, and a review of documents and news reports. For the field survey, four people interviewed 100 beneficiaries of

assistance from Mercy Corps and other organizations.¹ Using a questionnaire, the survey team interviewed 25 people from each of these four sections of Jakarta: Kedaung Kali Angke, Prumpung, Slipi, and Kampung Melayu. All four areas received assistance during the flood from Mercy Corps and other organizations. Mercy Corps operates a food-for-work program in the first two areas but has no direct ongoing presence in the third and fourth areas. Staff conducted the focus group discussions with assistance recipients in Prumpung (18 people) and Kedaung Kali Angke (16 people).

II. Context

A. Mercy Corps in Indonesia

Transitional Activity Program. With funding from USAID, Mercy Corps has implemented food distribution activities in Jakarta since 1999. The objective of the current Transitional Activity Program (TAP) is to mitigate the effects of conflict and the economic crisis in poor urban communities and to promote recovery. Mercy Corps runs four main activities under the TAP:

1. Providing temporary food-for-work opportunities for the poor in Jakarta
2. Using Indonesian NGOs to help organize communities for the food-for-work projects
3. Distributing free food to local institutions such as orphanages, schools, and hospitals
4. Providing free food to certain groups such as vulnerable mothers and children under five years of age

The TAP employs technical and coordinating staff in the Jakarta office as well as 14 community organizers based in the field. The community organizers in turn establish a network of contacts with local government and other players in each neighborhood where the project operates. At the time of the flood, the project was providing food for work to about 4,500 people in 14 neighborhoods of Jakarta and free food to another 10,000 people through local institutions.

The TAP team had previous experience in providing flood relief, with assistance from USAID/OFDA. In February and March 2001, Mercy Corps assisted the East Jakarta districts of Kampung Melayu and Bukit Duri in cleaning their neighborhoods and rebuilding 60 homes and community infrastructure. Mercy Corps gave cleaning and

¹ The contracted survey team members were Argentini Panca P., Deasy Ria Santi, Djadjat Sudradjat, and Indriyani Ratnaningsih. The sample was admittedly too small to be a definitive quantitative survey, but it provided a snapshot of flood assistance and narrative feedback on aid providers.

building materials to the affected families, and facilitated the community organizing that got the initiative off the ground.

NGO Grants and other programs. Mercy Corps also runs a Grants project funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The project is designed to support food security, improve the economic status of Indonesians, and provide training and capacity building. The project does this by making grants to local NGOs. One of the priority funding areas is relief assistance. The project also funds NGOs providing health and nutrition care and education, support for food production and processing, microenterprise activities, and microcredit.

Mercy Corps Indonesia also runs several other programs, including emergency relief and longer-term assistance to conflict-affected populations in Maluku and Central Sulawesi Provinces.

B. The Flood

Beginning on January 29, 2002, Indonesia experienced downpours that resulted in massive flooding in multiple areas of Greater Jakarta as well as other regions of the country. About 15–20 percent of the city was under water at depths of up to 3 meters by February 1. Reportedly it was the worst flooding in the city since 1996 if not earlier. Within a couple of days, 17 people had died as a result of the floods in Jakarta. As of February 7, the media were reporting that 57 people had died in Jakarta and the surrounding towns of Bekasi, Tangerang, and Depok. By that time, throughout Indonesia, flood-related incidents had claimed a total of 142 lives.

The floods left many people temporarily homeless at first, and they took refuge in places of worship, schools, government offices, and health clinics. Government and private organizations set up temporary posts (or *poskos*) to provide basic supplies such as water and blankets and to feed people at public kitchens. Those whose homes were flooded were resourceful in quickly finding alternative places to stay. The Flood Posko of the Governor's Office reported that a total of 114,441 displaced persons were staying in about 300 temporary shelters as of February 3, but that official number of displaced dropped to 42,400 on February 7 and to 15,019 by February 15, according to OCHA.

After the initial concerns of rescuing, sheltering, and feeding the displaced, disease became a matter of concern. Within a week, the media were reporting that the flooding was responsible for 18,000 cases of malaria and diarrhoea. After the floods had subsided, in mid-March, the *Jakarta Post* claimed that 13 people had died from leptospirosis, which can be passed from rats to humans during times of flooding.

The flood damaged productive assets and distorted the Jakarta economy also. During the disaster, prices of basic food commodities (rice, vegetables, eggs, oil) in the markets doubled or tripled. But beyond the short term, the flood destroyed the houses of the poor in particular, because they tend to live in high-risk areas. Many of them lost a significant part of their belongings, including clothing and household items, working equipment, and supplies.

C. National and International Response

Satkorlak PBP (Provincial Coordinating Body for Disaster Management) of Greater Jakarta established an integrated disaster response to coordinate the government effort. Government offices that were involved included the Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of People's Welfare, Ministry of Political Affairs and Security, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Public Works, the armed forces, and national search and rescue, as well as the Jakarta City Government. The National Red Cross (PMI) provided food to the public kitchens and relief kits, clothes, water, cleaning equipment, and other supplies. The Water Works Company (PAM) and other private companies provided water. A number of Indonesian businesses and NGOs also contributed to the effort, particularly in the areas where they have operations.

The international community also provided help. On February 8, OCHA reported that USAID was providing over \$300,000 in emergency funding, in addition to rice, through its partners World Vision, Catholic Relief Services, CARE, International Medical Corps, and Mercy Corps. The Australian Government channeled US\$500,000 in assistance through the International Federation for Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the World Food Programme. A number of other embassies and international organizations also provided funding or food.

III. Mercy Corps' Intervention

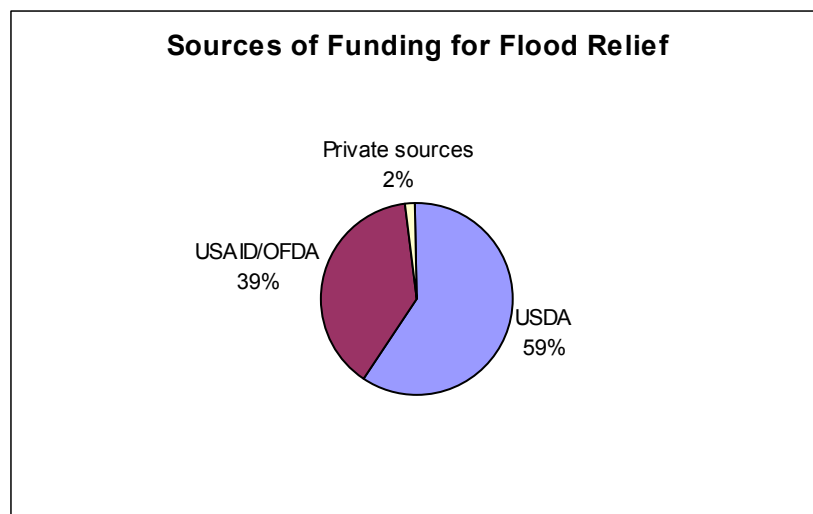
When the flooding began, Mercy Corps staff quickly began investigating the extent and potential of the disaster. During the flood, the Mercy Corps office had no official coordinating team as such. But staff from each program involved in the relief effort met daily to trade information and make plans. TAP and Grants office staff visited the field to assess the changing situation in flooding areas as rains continued, relying heavily on the Community Organizers and local contacts.

Mercy Corps marshaled existing and new funding for flood-related activities. USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) provided Mercy Corps with \$50,000. Between January 29 to February 19, the USAID-funded TAP also provided

in-kind donations of 144 metric tons of rice, 58 metric tons of wheat soy blend, and 4 metric tons of vegetable oil, which served about 24,000 households. Mercy Corps Indonesia also received another \$2,143 from other sources, mostly private companies and the American Chambers of Commerce.

Using flood donations, the Mercy Corps admin/finance team handled the procurement of relief supplies, and the TAP team handled the distribution through its community networks. Mercy Corps used the special funding for posko shelter supplies (such as tarps and mats), posko cooking equipment and utensils (stoves, pans, cutlery), blankets, boots, cleaning supplies (hoes, mops, detergents), water pumps, water containers, and school supplies (pens, pencils, and notebooks). Mercy Corps also provided the government with two rubber boats for initial rescue efforts. The TAP team worked in the following sections of Jakarta (all but Kampung Melayu were areas where Mercy Corps had food-for-work activities):

- Kampung Melayu
- Prumpung
- Kedaung Kali Angke
- Cengkareng Timur
- Kapuk
- Muara Baru
- RawaTerate
- Jelambar



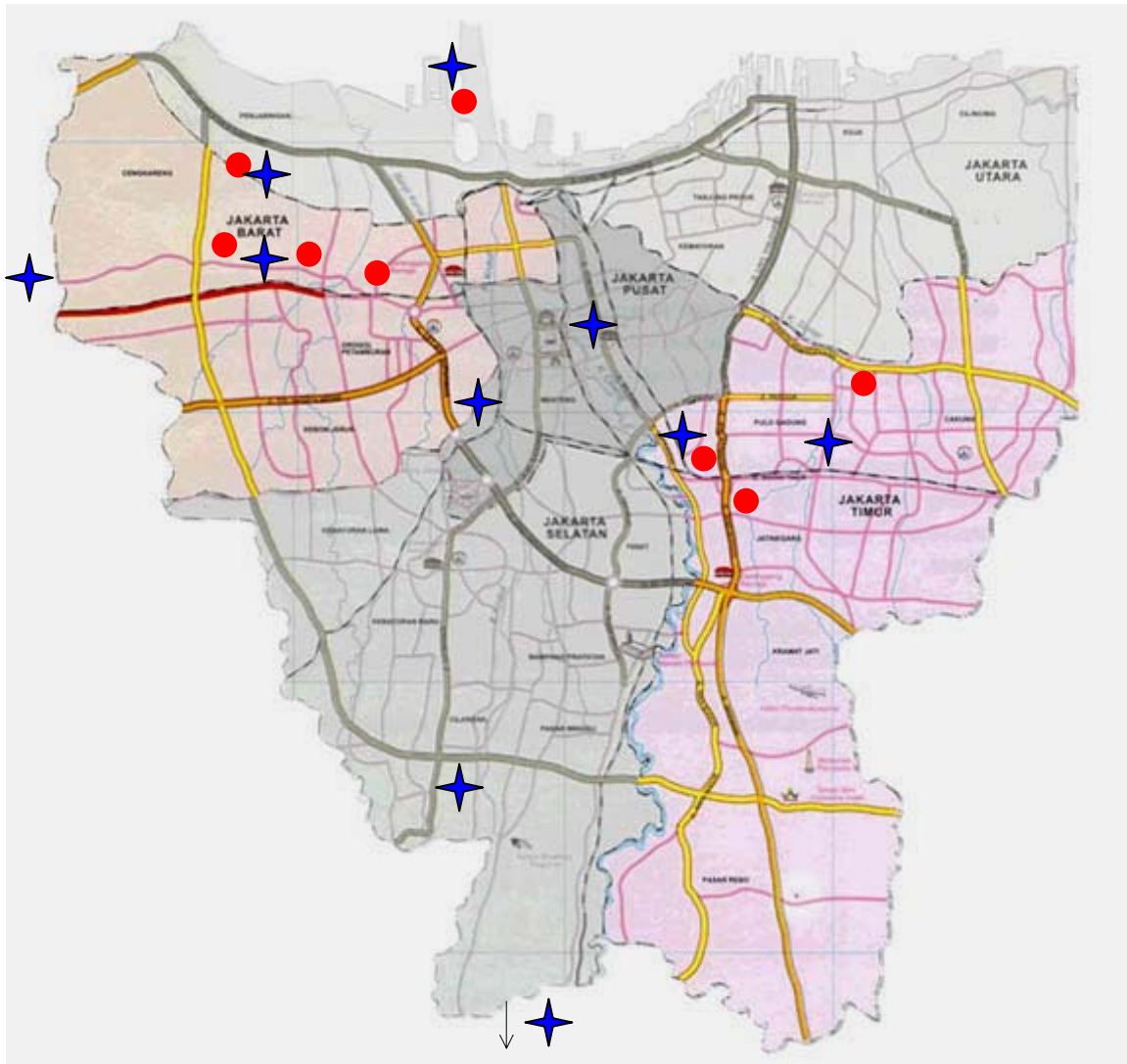
Note: Excludes food commodities.

The Grants team also did assessments of neighborhood flooding and received additional information from its partners. Aside from the special external funding for

the floods, the Mercy Corps Grants Program provided another Rp. 691 million (about \$75,000) through grants to local NGOs providing flood relief.² The Grants Program worked through the following non-government partners in the Greater Jakarta area, in addition to the regional governments (Walikota office) of East and West Jakarta:

- *Yayasan Bethel Seksi Sosial* provided food for 1350 people in Slipi (Petamburan), cooked and distributed through public kitchens.
- *Yayasan Bina Ekonomi Sosial Terpadu (BEST)* supplied food for 4735 people in Tangerang through public kitchens.
- *Suara Ibu Peduli* distributed blankets, soap, rehydration salts, skin cream, and tempe/tofu/eggs for 1307 people in various areas including Cilandak and Depok.
- *Yayasan Tirta Guna* provided blankets plus supplies and food for public kitchens for 1080 people in Tangerang.
- *Yayasan Wahana Visi Indonesia* operated a mobile health post serving about 8000 people in Central and East Jakarta.
- *Yayasan Az Zahra* distributed side dishes, dried milk, and drinking water for 6301 beneficiaries in Kampung Melayu.
- *Fordati* provided health services and supplies by volunteer doctors and nurses to 3718 beneficiaries in Kapuk, Muara Baru, Kedaung Kali Angke, Prumpung, and Cengkareng Timur.

² In Central and East Java, the Grants program also provided flood relief through three local NGO partners. This case study focuses on Jakarta.



- TAP areas where Mercy Corps provided assistance
- ★ Areas where Mercy Corps Grant partners provided assistance

IV. Beneficiary Feedback

To find out how well the various assistance providers performed during the flood, Mercy Corps solicited the views of beneficiaries through the field survey and focus group discussions. The 100 people interviewed for the survey represented differing circumstances, but a fairly typical respondent was a married woman in her forties, maybe with a primary school education. She and her family live in a 1-2 room house of permanent construction, which has a television but probably no piped water or toilet. Her household's income is perhaps \$50 a month. Their house floods at least

once a year, and this year the waters have seriously damaged their home and swept away household items such as clothing and furniture.

Most households surveyed by Mercy Corps received more than one type of aid during the flooding period, not only from Mercy Corps and its NGO partners but also from local government and possibly political parties, houses of worship, or the military. Being Mercy Corps beneficiaries, almost all the respondents reported receiving uncooked food such as rice (97 of 100) and some type of non-food items (88) such as blankets or cleaning equipment. Two-thirds received medicine and hygiene kits. About half received cooked food from a posko, temporary shelter, or water. Forty percent received school-related assistance such as supplies or uniforms.

Here are some of the main themes of their responses to the questionnaire:

Most respondents expressed satisfaction with the aid they received from all sources.

When asked to rate the performance of various agencies, by far the most common response was “good.” This may reflect a cultural reluctance to criticize directly, particularly to speak negatively about an agency that has provided some help, however limited. Mercy Corps and local NGOs generally scored slightly higher than local government in those ratings, but not by a wide margin. (Individuals’ comments revealed a bit more – see below.)

The community was pleased with Mercy Corps’ assistance. The survey suggested that most people found Mercy Corps to be responsive, particularly in sections of the city where Mercy Corps already knew the community, and vice versa, because of TAP activities. When asked about the organization’s positive characteristics, many respondents noted that Mercy Corps “has worked for years in this community” and regularly talks with people and conducts assessments. Some said the organization was “fair” and “honest.” The survey and focus group discussions produced only a few negative comments about Mercy Corps. For example, one respondent said it was “too selective” when choosing beneficiaries of flood assistance. Another said too many people were involved in the effort, and another that coordination was poor. One focus group participant said Mercy Corps was late in distributing blankets and some non-food items (after the flood was over). But the comments were generally positive.

Views of the government’s performance were mixed. During the floods, the press was often quite critical of the government’s response. But overall, Mercy Corps’ survey respondents expressed general satisfaction with the government’s performance or, at worst, a mixed reaction. The responses did vary somewhat by region. For example, the ratings of the government’s performance from the survey

and focus group discussions were lower in Kedaung Kali Angke and Kampung Melayu than in Slipi and Prumpung, particularly regarding the speed of response and the selection of beneficiaries. Some people were critical not of the aid the government provided but of the aid the government *failed* to provide: 13 respondents said they expected to receive help from the government but never did. In the focus group discussions, some people complained that families who did not have ID cards for the area did not receive assistance.

People's view of "the government" appeared to be quite personal. The face of the government is often the RT or RW leader (neighborhood- and community-level leaders). Some people praised the RT or RW as individuals who were from the community and knew about its problems, or alternatively, as out of touch, bureaucratic, or "more concerned about themselves." Focus group members in one area said that the local government "didn't care" about the community. In other areas, the RT or RW was appreciated precisely because he did care and because, living in the flooded community or having relatives there, he had experienced the "same condition."

The basics were the most appreciated types of aid. Respondents said the most useful types of assistance received were uncooked food such as rice (84% of respondents who received this type of aid ranked it among the most useful), money or financial relief (84%),³ food at a public kitchen (65%), and household non-food items (65%). Assistance less frequently identified as useful included hygiene kits with cleaning equipment, soap, etc. (19%); water (18%); and school supplies (13%). Only six people said they received assistance that was *not* useful (including water pumps and wheat soy blend, or WSB). Some people in the focus group discussions complained that there were not enough shelter spaces available during the height of the flood, and some older people did not go to shelters.

Two types of aid still needed were money and building materials. Most respondents appeared to recover fairly quickly from the flood. By early April when the survey was conducted, 3 out of 5 respondents said their lives had more-or-less returned to normal. Of those whose lives had not returned to the way things were before the flood, 14 said they still needed assistance to rebuild their houses and 12 said they needed working capital. These two types of assistance were repeatedly mentioned throughout the survey in response to other questions too.

³ The government was the main source of cash assistance.

Most people don't mind signing their names to verify they received the aid. When asked how they felt when a donor agency asks beneficiaries to sign for assistance, 86 of 100 had no objection. Seven said it made them a little uncomfortable. But 13 people volunteered that they had never been asked to sign their names to receive assistance during the flood.⁴ Possibly someone else in the family besides the respondent signed for the aid. However, collecting signatures from recipients may be an area that requires additional monitoring in the future.

V. Lessons Learned: Successful Emergency Response

A. Partnerships

Interviews and survey responses illustrate why an organization such as Mercy Corps is much better able to respond to an emergency if it has a prior on-the-ground presence in affected communities. Mercy Corps' response was not without fault, but its main successes can be largely credited to three types of partnership during the floods. The first was direct partnerships with communities and local government through the TAP. The second type of partnership was with local NGOs who could respond to the floods with funding from the Grants program. The third partnership was with flexible donors, USAID and USDA. Having such bonds already in place enhanced Mercy Corps' speed, targeting, responsiveness, and accountability.

Speed. Before the relief effort truly geared up, TAP staff were already helping to rescue people and their belongings trapped in flooded areas as the waters rose. In many cases, they were on the ground before even the government and military had fielded assessment teams or rescue personnel. In TAP areas, an existing network provided a head-start. For example, Mercy Corps had already established an understanding with local government figures, who knew us and supported our work. There was no need to introduce ourselves, ask for official permission, or gain their confidence and cooperation. And Mercy Corps already had experienced staff working in the flooded areas, including a crew of Community Organizers on site who had established links with the communities and knew the local players and how Mercy Corps operates.

The Grants program had the flexibility to address needs in other areas and in other sectors that the TAP could not. Mercy Corps found it easier to work quickly through NGOs it had worked with before, for several reasons. The first is that current NGO partners knew how Mercy Corps operates and understood our expectations. On the other hand, the Grants program also knew these NGOs and so could process a

⁴ The questionnaire did not specifically ask this question, but some people told this to the surveyor, who made a note of it on the survey form.

contract quickly without spending valuable time assessing the NGOs' capacity. The Grants team was able to turn around grants within a day. In some cases, Mercy Corps already had a contract in place for an ongoing project, so the NGO could even temporarily use funding from an existing contract while waiting for the emergency funding to be released.

An existing relationship with USAID also increased the speed of the flood response. USAID was able to quickly provide funds to Mercy Corps and other INGOs such as World Vision and CWS because of the prior experience with them and confidence in their systems of targeting and accountability. In addition, Mercy Corps already had USAID-provided resources in stock in North Jakarta (particularly rice, oil, and wheat soy blend) that could be quickly distributed to victims of the flood. USAID could also refer other agencies with funds but no field operations to organizations like Mercy Corps. USDA funding for the Grants program was also invaluable because it is flexible and available for emergency situations as soon as they happen.

Targeting. In times of emergency, an agency that already has a program in low-income areas has two important advantages over one that does not when trying to reach the most needy. First, the agency with experience in the region has already gone through a process to identify the region as a priority area for poverty alleviation. Second, it has also established mechanisms for identifying individuals within the region who are particularly in need of assistance. So during an emergency, the agency should be able not only to locate those who suffered losses during the catastrophe, but also more quickly reach the poor, who suffer disproportionately during disasters.

Mercy Corps went through these exercises when it selected Jakarta locations for the TAP, and Helen Keller International's research has verified that the targeting was generally accurate. Mercy Corps flood beneficiaries in TAP areas were primarily its food-for-work beneficiaries, so Mercy Corps had essentially already done most of the targeting before the flood struck.⁵ And not surprisingly, many of the TAP areas are flood prone, because the poor are usually the ones who settle in less-desirable lands such as along canals and in flood plains.

The survey results illustrate this point. Of the four areas Mercy Corps visited for its field survey, the targeting appears to have been more precise in the two areas where

⁵ Additional needy beneficiaries were identified informally, mainly based on the local leader's (RT/RW) knowledge of who in his community was most in need. That may be the best we can do during a crisis, though such a system of choosing additional beneficiaries gives the RT/RW substantial discretion.

Mercy Corps already had an operational presence through the TAP (Prumpung and Kedaung Kali Angke). The responses indicate that beneficiaries in those two areas were more likely to be poor than the beneficiaries in the other two areas, particularly Slipi. For example, the reported household income among respondents in Slipi (Rp. 687,000) was almost twice that of respondents in Kedaung Kali Angke (Rp. 356,000) or Prumpung (Rp. 388,000). Kampung Melayu, where Mercy Corps has worked before but does not have a permanent project, was in the middle (Rp. 457,000). The respondents from TAP areas also had smaller houses (e.g., an average of 1.5 rooms in Prumpung vs. 2.3 in Slipi) and generally less desirable living conditions. The survey team were also more likely to identify the respondents in TAP areas as poor.

None of these indicators is definitive by itself, but together they reinforce the idea that the people in TAP areas were the most vulnerable of those who Mercy Corps helped. This does not mean that the other areas did not need assistance. But the residents of the TAP areas appear to have had fewer material resources available for coping with floods and recovering from them.

One other note. In the confusion of emergencies, aid sometimes leaks to people who did not actually suffer significant losses. This appears to have been true in during the Jakarta floods as well: 13 respondents claimed not to have suffered any permanent loss from the floods but still received assistance from various sources. One advantage of working among those who have previously been identified as low-income may be that even leaked emergency assistance is more likely to wind up in the hands of the poor, even if those poor people were not directly harmed by the current disaster.

Responsiveness. The agency with experience on the ground should, in theory, have an advantage not only in identifying the poor but also in ensuring that the assistance it provides is appropriate and responsive to the local situation.

Mercy Corps and its experienced NGO partners had several characteristics that improved its responsiveness. The TAP's skills and contacts served them well in assessing changes in the local situation quickly. Because it works in a different way, the Grants team did not have this same level of expertise and knowledge about the Jakarta communities it served. Instead it relied on its partners to investigate changes in flooding levels and the needs of the community. The Grants program tried to choose NGOs with experience in the region they were assisting, for obvious reasons. One NGO, for example, had worked in the community for 25 years. Another worked through local posyandu cadres (health-post volunteers) who knew the players and the context.

Not surprisingly, the respondents to the survey recognized the value of an organization's knowledge of and links to the community. They appreciated organizations that had spent time with them and found out what they needed most. Most often, they mentioned three ways an organization came to know their community: (1) through visits, surveys, discussions, and "asking questions"; (2) through long experience working in the area; and (3) by living or being based in the community. For example, the respondents identified these positive characteristics in an aid organization:

- knew about the area before the flood
- is always surveying
- has staff in the area
- frequently conducts field visits and discusses with the community
- has activities that involve the community
- always asks the people first
- works directly with the people
- is a part of the community
- sees the community's daily life
- is willing to listen to the people's concerns

Three other positive characteristics frequently mentioned were an organization's perseverance in its work, active staff, and collaboration with the community.

Accountability. One important reason for working with known parties and through existing social networks is to ensure the emergency aid is used accountably. The media ran stories during the flood questioning whether intended beneficiaries were receiving flood assistance they needed and whether government agencies and local NGOs were using funds wisely.

In the TAP areas, Mercy Corps and its local partners already had systems in place that were designed to ensure accountability for the aid it provided. For example, Mercy Corps staff and local government knew the donor's record-keeping requirements when releasing donated goods to beneficiaries. The Mercy Corps logistics team already had a system in place for tracking movements and distributions of food commodities.

The Grants team also had accountability procedures in place for its partners to follow, and it normally provides them with orientation. But in an emergency, there is little time to provide orientation to NGOs. As a result, the Grants program tried to rely either on existing NGO partners' having experience with Mercy Corps or, in the case of new partners, having experience in accounting for grant funding in a similar

way. Administratively, the new partnerships took a bit more work and effort and represented more of a risk. The results with new organizations were mixed. One NGO, for example, clearly did not have the depth of technical experience required and were logistically unprepared for large crowds expecting food and other aid. On the other hand, another group consisting of volunteer doctors were committed and effective on the ground, despite being administratively difficult to work with because they were not familiar with Mercy Corps procedures.

With the inexperienced NGOs, the risks of compromising accountability in an urgent situation appeared in several areas:

- ***Risks associated with front-loading*** – One risk with a new partner in this type of situation is that emergency grants are generally front-loaded. That is, most of the funding is usually given when the contract is signed, rather than in installments, so that the organization can quickly buy needed items for distribution. So most of the money is already issued before Mercy Corps can verify the NGO's performance or review its financial records.
- ***Budgeting and allowable costs*** – Existing partners know what costs are allowable and appropriate. For new partners, additional time-consuming negotiation may be necessary. For example, one new partner requested funds to pay community volunteers who cooked food at a posko, which is not normally allowable by the Grants criteria.
- ***Financial record-keeping and reporting*** – The newer NGOs did not have experience in reporting according to Mercy Corps standards. One new group, for example, submitted receipts and calculations without using required formats. That group also had no full-time financial professional. Others submitted receipts that were not particularly official looking, raising doubt about their authenticity.
- ***Price comparisons*** – Even during an emergency, Mercy Corps and its donors require NGO partners to find competitive prices. This becomes more challenging and frustrating during an emergency, because quantities of key items needed in an emergency are in short supply and prices are higher than usual. Some new partners did not have experience or good systems for finding competitive prices. Mercy Corps itself struggled to do competitive yet quick procurement.
- ***Accountability tools*** – Experienced partners of Mercy Corps are familiar with Mercy Corps' accountability tools and requirements, such as using signature

sheets for beneficiaries to sign when they received items, ensuring food rations are standard, and using appropriate waybills for shipments.

- *Cost-effectiveness and flexibility* – Reliable, accountable partners will not only look for ways to reduce costs but also for ways to use funds wisely and effectively. One NGO during the flood, for example, found during ongoing assessments that the water supplies allowable in its budget were no longer required by the community. So the NGO asked Mercy Corps to reallocate funds for water to meet other community needs. Mercy Corps may not have the same confidence that a new partner would look for ways to use funding most effectively.

B. Strategy, Skills, and Emergency Systems

In addition to resources and good intentions, an organization working in an emergency must have a clear strategy and the skills and systems to respond effectively. Mercy Corps and its experienced partners had some advantages here too but additional preparation would make them better able to respond in the future.

The TAP had several key assets which have already been noted. These included experience in the community, a distribution system in place, and local partnerships. The TAP team also had technical skills that are valuable in an emergency, including staff with engineering and logistics skills, the ability to organize large numbers of people, assessment skills in various sectors, and monitoring abilities. In addition, many of the TAP staff already had experience in a similar situation from the previous year's floods in Kampung Melayu and Bukit Duri.

Although the TAP staff performed exceptionally during the flood, the program is not geared to emergency situations. For example:

- TAP activities are usually ongoing and routine, not in response to a crisis.
- The team distributes commodities according to a regular, fairly predictable schedule, not in an urgent, chaotic environment.
- Food-for-work and community organizing events are planned in advance and executed in non-emergency situations and with non-life-threatening consequences.
- Usually there are fewer players to coordinate with locally compared to a disaster time.
- TAP carefully selects the sectors and activities of its work. In an emergency, staff are forced to decide quickly whether and how to respond to urgent sectoral challenges (e.g., health and medical crises).

- Even the previous flood relief effort in 2001 was focused on recovery (clean-up and rebuilding homes), rather than on time-sensitive emergency services.

Next time, the TAP team could be even more effective if they received some additional training and had a clear strategy and preparation to rely on. They deserve some extra support, in other words.

Like most NGOs in Jakarta, the Grants partners also do not usually undertake emergency work. Most of them responded skillfully to the flooding, but in some cases the NGO partners' lack of experience was apparent. For example, sometimes their assessment of the situation was inaccurate, their coordination limited, and their supplies of goods insufficient for the situation.

VI. Looking Ahead

The Mercy Corps team has been through some discussions of lessons learned from the flood, and some of these have been documented. In particular, the TAP team has recorded some specific operational lessons that can be applied during the next emergency, such as physical requirements of poskos and selecting appropriate types of assistance. Those lessons supplement this paper (see Attachment 1). Offered here are four broad suggestions for improving Mercy Corps' urban emergency activities in the future.

1. Recognize our institutional strengths, weaknesses, and limitations – Mercy Corps does some things very well, but we should recognize that some sectoral and geographic areas are beyond our expertise. In an emergency, that is, “first, do no harm.” For example, Mercy Corps does not have the expertise to directly distribute medical supplies, and in some cases our donor regulations restrict such distributions too. We also have no particular expertise in rescue, though in a life-threatening disaster we would do the best we can. Before – rather than during – a disaster, Mercy Corps should identify its strengths and weaknesses and decide where it can offer some advantage. In other areas, we should act as facilitator and possibly as donor of NGOs, but not as direct implementer. We should think carefully about how we should approach sectors (e.g., medical and health) where we have limited technical skills. Geographically, our expertise is in TAP neighborhoods and any areas where our NGO partners have established relationships, not only with the community but also with government and other NGOs.

2. Develop a coordinating team for emergencies – Since disasters happen periodically in Jakarta, Mercy Corps might consider whether to establish an emergency team here. This team could take the lead in organizing and coordinating

our response in future disasters. It could also build better communications with the government and other aid providers, before and during the emergency. The team might also have a secondary function as a security team. It could then, for example, help coordinate evacuation of the Jakarta office in the case of threats or disaster. This function would not necessarily demand much of the team members' time except in an emergency situation.

3. Build some expertise in urban emergency response – If we want to continue to seek funding and provide assistance in times of emergency, we should develop our staff capacities in that area and the capacities of our partners. This might mean providing training in such areas as rapid assessment, Sphere standards, and urgent interventions in certain sectors. We could also sponsor staff exchange and trainings between the Maluku and Jakarta offices in areas related to emergency response. At a minimum, we should review lessons learned from the 2002 flood before the end of the year and encourage our partners to do the same. This paper is not intended to be a list of operational lessons learned or a checklist for implementing emergency activities, but other Mercy Corps teams and partners have been through their own self-examination of specific systems and procedures. Those operational lessons should be reviewed later this year.

4. Prepare a strategy for flooding and other emergencies – Not all disasters are predictable, but flooding in Jakarta is more so. Flooding in about February of 2001 and 2002 was significant enough for Mercy Corps, other organizations, and donors to devote substantial time and resources. And nearly two-thirds of the survey respondents said their house floods at least once a year, and a quarter said several times a year. The coming year, therefore, Mercy Corps could take such steps as:

- urging beneficiaries living in flood-prone areas to prepare as the rainy season approaches, and maybe providing related training/socialization
- devising a Mercy Corps flood-relief strategy before the rainy season arrives, and deciding tentatively the sectors and areas we should work in
- locating reliable, flexible vendors and making other internal preparations for fast procurement if flooding occurs
- identifying some potential NGO partners in advance to fill sectoral gaps, and discussing emergency procedures and accountability issues with them ahead of time
- learning about the government's preparations, contingency plans, and lines of communication in case of flooding
- coordinating with other international NGOs about their plans, if any
- requesting, in advance, rapid approval of funding from donors if flooding should occur.

Attachment 1:

Flood Relief Lessons Learned from the Transitional Activity Program (TAP)

1. Food should be distributed through public kitchens; this will ease monitoring of food utilization and targeting. The weakness of free distribution is that it is difficult to identify the targeted victims of the flood. In addition, it can raise social jealousy among flood victims who stay at home. We could maybe provide cooked meals for those who do not come to poskos.
2. If we open our own posko (public kitchen/temporary shelter), we should promptly provide related needs such as rice, dishes, drinking water, kerosene, tents, plastic tarps, etc. This is especially true if we have no means for integrating local resources. Buying such things takes time.
3. It is difficult to integrate our efforts with local resources because other parties have their own interests (many poskos are established by political parties).
4. At least every posko should involve a security (keamanan) task force from the community.
5. Things needed:
 - a. For establishing a posko: tent (as shelter for refugee), plastic sheeting, blankets, cooking equipment, drinking water, food (milk, rice, sides dishes and spices), lamp, kerosene, and clean water.
 - b. For evacuation: rubber boats, life jackets, and rope.
 - c. Cleaning tools or materials for public infrastructure rehabilitation.
 - d. Medicine, health facilities, and watsan supplies.
6. There should be transparency in distributing materials at the posko.
7. It is hard to coordinate with government agencies such as the Indonesian Red Cross, health offices, and even some districts and local neighborhoods (RW). For example, when we facilitated the provision of medicine for communities, we approached related parties, but there was no follow-up or response. It would be better and quicker to coordinate with a university or other donor agency. For tents, we can collaborate with the local military office (kodim); for boats, with outdoors/nature groups; for medicine and paramedics, with hospitals or universities. Meanwhile, big multinational companies such as Unilever (cleaning products), PT Kao (cleaning products), PT Nestle (dairy

- products), Mayora Indah (foods), Kimia Farma (medicines), or the media (radio and television) have their own programs or they have already coordinated with local government to provide assistance and aid.
8. As we implement assistance provision, we should report to the related government agency.
 9. Mercy Corps aid should focus more on food distribution and facilitating emergency food supplies for flood victims, and post-flood needs. It should not focus on medical services or evacuation to safety.
 10. It is interesting that some agencies both provide and ask for assistance. They may provide such things as sanitary napkins (NU) and infant milk (Suara Ibu Peduli) to us, while also asking for a grant from Mercy Corps for other items.
 11. Areas that are frequent victims of flooding (often suffering from huge floods), like Northern Cipinang Besar and Kampung Melayu, often get excessive aid from some agencies, and this sometimes results in a lack of coordination.
 12. Mercy Corps should maintain a list of agencies that have been involved with us in flood activities (and gather any new information). This information could be followed up so in the future the flood response can be executed smoothly.
 13. Items for non-individual (group) distribution such as cleaning tools should be provided based on an agreement between local government (neighborhood RT, RW) and community leaders and representatives. That way, more than one group could use the tools simultaneously. Distribution of small quantities of such goods in areas with huge numbers of refugees should be executed carefully.
 14. Mercy Corps' procurement office should become familiar with the type and purpose of needed goods, according to demand, including their quality. Purchasing time should be accelerated when possible. Including the cost of transportation for delivering goods to the site is more efficient.
 15. The following is an effective and efficient system:
 - a. Emergency team consisting of field officer, coordinator, logistics/transportation, purchasing, and other monitoring staff
 - b. Good distribution and storing system
 - c. Collaboration system with Grants, other NGOs, or donors.

16. Project monitoring. Small areas can be monitored by one staff person. Larger areas can be monitored by two persons in order to check progress, coordinate in the field, and assist community leaders or community organizers. To control food/materials in the field, we used such forms as:
- a. A list of recipients (from MC to posko and from posko to recipient)
 - b. An inventory store room (rice, wsb, oil, and kerosene)
 - c. Waybills for commodities
17. Mercy Corps could integrate and get assistance from and build trust with various parties in distributing any kind of goods for meeting community needs. Therefore, communities that already know Mercy Corps hope that MC can facilitate in providing other types of aid to them besides foods (rice, WSB and oil). The ration that we use is 1 kg of rice, 0.4 kg of WSB and 0.01 kg of vegetable oil per HH for period of every 3 days.