

THE MONGOL RALLY: HOW YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Mercy Corps is working in Mongolia to strengthen the ability of local communities to plan, implement and monitor the delivery of services for the public benefit, particularly at grassroots level.

How will the Mongol Rally help?

In addition to being a lot of fun, frolics and fantastic adventures, the Mongol Rally will also help make a vital difference to the communities that Mercy Corps is working with in Mongolia.

The funds raised from the Mongol Rally will enable the communities in all of the aimags (regions) where we are implementing our Training, Advocacy and Networking programme to develop small community projects addressing priority issues, as assessed by the communities themselves.

These projects will range from setting up Ger (traditional Mongolian felt tent) kindergartens, building children's playgrounds, and establishing youth development centres to building wells and environmentally friendly waste management.

In each of the aimags that we work in, the funds raised through the Mongol Rally will ensure a better quality of life for all and will help to "Be the Change" for the many children and families that we work with.

Mercy Corps in Mongolia

Mercy Corps Training, Advocacy and Networking (TAN) programme objectives of community mobilisation are two-fold; to increase citizen participation in decision-making and to encourage rural civil society organisations to better respond to expressed community needs.



Photo: Thatcher Cook/Mercy Corps

The TAN Project has provided support to local organisations to help them strengthen the impact of their work in their local community, build closer ties with their constituencies and become recognised community leaders.

The TAN Project has since developed and trained 60 civil society organisation representatives and community leaders from Khentii, Dundgobi, Uvurhangai, Arhangai and Bulgan aimags in community needs assessment methodology. Community awareness meetings followed by needs assessments involved more than 500 citizens in each aimag. It was found out that citizens are rarely consulted on local governance or community development issues.

There are still a lot of questions regarding the delivery of public services, legal issues, and decisions of local government. This was the first time that the ordinary citizens were asked their views on the priority issues for their community, the obstacles to their participation and the potential and resources the community people themselves have to solve their problems.

The results of these discussions were presented to local officials and very practical decisions were demanded to address priority issues. This process, facilitated by grassroots organisations, laid foundation for dialogue and cooperation between community and decision-makers.



Photo: Paul Dudley-Hart/Mercy Corps

Why Mongolia?

Mongolia's transition to a market economy had a severe impact on rural livelihoods. A wide-scale breakdown in social and economic institutions affected the welfare of rural people and created serious environmental challenges. Social infrastructure such as electricity, power heating, water supply, and medical services in the rural areas has seriously deteriorated.

Significant research carried out by Mercy Corps concluded that citizens are largely recipients instead of decision-makers in the use of resources for public benefit. Rural Mongolia is at risk of falling into a poverty trap, with problems becoming more intractable. For the last five years rural income growth has remained at less than 1% compared with 30% for urban areas. As much of 60% of the population in areas of rural Mongolia are below the poverty line.

In rural communities, participation in organised community activity beyond elections is low. Civil society organisations have not been responsive to their constituency and lack support from the very people that they are trying to represent. Local government has lacked the capacity to take on local planning and delivery of services.

To address these challenges to development, Mercy Corps designed the Training, Advocacy and Networking Project's Community Mobilisation Project to strengthen the ability of local communities (i.e. civil society organisations and local government officials) to plan, implement and monitor the delivery of services for public benefit, particularly at the household level.

Mercy Corps alleviates suffering, poverty and oppression by helping people build secure, productive and just communities. Since 1979, Mercy Corps has provided more than £500 million in assistance to people in 81 countries. The organisation's 2,100 staff worldwide currently reach 7 million people in more than 35 countries. Mercy Corps allocates more than 92 percent of its resources to programmes that assist people in need.

By working at a grassroots level, we have found that it is only when communities set their own agendas and implement programmes themselves, that their successes result in the renewed hope, confidence and skills to continue to develop independently.

All over the world, millions of innocent people are caught up in intolerable situations. But they are not today's victims; they are tomorrow's heroes, who have the power to transform their own communities. Mercy Corps works with these communities in the world's most difficult conflicts and disasters to unleash the potential of people who can win against impossible odds.



Photo: Dominique Poulin/Mercy Corps

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