

MERCY CORPS' YOUTH PROGRAMS: INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

Today, half the world's population is under 25 – the largest proportion of young people ever recorded. Fully 80 percent of world youth live in developing countries. In the next decade, more than a billion young people will enter the global labor market, yet economists predict only 300 million new jobs.

Without access to the workforce and social fabric, this generation is more likely to join violent movements, migrate, or simply give up hope. Because employment alone cannot absorb such a surge in labor supply, youth energy must be channeled towards other productive activities, such as relevant learning or achieving development goals. Fortunately, young people are hungry to make a difference and can propel profound change in the world.

Given the demographic youth bulge worldwide, Mercy Corps recognizes the importance of engaging young people in achieving its mission of building secure, productive and just communities. Our projects, worth \$55 million in 2009, helped young people develop useful skills and access opportunities to engage in social and economic development. We're working to help youth earn a living wage and cultivate a sense of responsibility, identity, creativity and hope.

Training for Job Skills in Niger

Our comprehensive program called Skills and Knowledge for Youth Empowerment (SKYE) includes community service, life skills, market-driven vocational/entrepreneurship training and microfinance.

To date, Mercy Corps has trained 344 peer educators who then reached 1,500 young people in vulnerable areas. To make sure that technical skills were aligned with market demand, and that young people were interested in the types of employment that have income potential, young people were first engaged in market research. While assessing the skills needed in the local economy, we were able to steer young people away from saturated fields and toward areas of

new opportunity, including entrepreneurial ventures.

Encouraging Engagement in Timor-Leste

Mercy Corps is helping youth in Timor-Leste engage in democratic nation-building, local decision-making and effective government administration. Our staff train and assist established youth organizations to provide civic education that improves the understanding between youth and government decision makers. This program reaches 65 percent of the population and targets the most vulnerable youth, including those with disabilities and in prison.

Teaching Modern Skills in Lebanon

Mercy Corps has reached more than 70,000 young people from a variety of backgrounds in Lebanon. Two Youth Leadership Centers in poor neighborhoods help young Lebanese develop computer, advocacy, and management skills through youth-led projects implemented with the community. Such collaborative process also transforms perceptions about youth capabilities.

Providing Emergency Education in Darfur

Mercy Corps provided educational supplies and services to 14,000 children in Darfur, Sudan. Three schools were rehabilitated and 180 temporary classrooms constructed in the camps for internally displaced persons. Working with local organizations and the Ministry of Education, Mercy Corps increased access to education while improving the quality of instruction.

Connecting Middle East Youth Globally

Our Global Citizen Corps program began in the Middle East in 2005 to help disaffected youth learn how to create and advocate for a better future. Through digital stories using video and photography, structured youth-to-youth dialogues across continents, and leadership opportunities, first-time computer users discovered peaceful ways to express themselves and make a difference in their communities.

To date, thousands of Arab and American youth have engaged in global citizenship education and community projects that transform the way they

Last year, Mercy Corps helped 16.7 million people turn crisis into opportunity.

see their role in society. Today, our website globalcitizencorps.org uses a web 2.0 portal that aggregates educational and user-generated content into a youth-friendly platform to inspire peaceful change worldwide.



Young people involved in Mercy Corps' Global Citizen Corps program in Gaza after completing a community service activity with children.

Photo: Cassandra Nelson/Mercy Corps

Developing Young Leaders in Kosovo

Our Support for Kosovo's Young Leaders (SKYL) program helps 2,328 young leaders from various ethnic groups become active participants in their society. This program began by providing leadership training to facilitate engagement in civic and economic activities. It also provides technical skills and support for work transition through apprenticeships, job preparedness and practical training.

Supporting Children After Trauma

Mercy Corps' Comfort for Kids program builds the capacity of those living or working with trauma-affected children. The methodology uses workbooks that engage students to express themselves and address their concerns. Extensive research supports the efficacy of this approach. To date, 9,000 people in Gaza, China, Peru and the US have been trained in the Comfort for Kids methodology.

Transforming Young Lives in Iraq

Mercy Corps has built 34 Centers for Excellence and computer labs in Iraqi schools to increase young people's access to information and ability

to think creatively. We provide training in Internet use, communication and vocational skills to decrease the isolation of youth from the rest of the world while increasing their knowledge, community pride and enthusiasm for education.

Building Peace in Nepal

Our Youth Initiatives for Peace and Reconciliation (YIPR) project has reduced the risk of conflict in Nepal by engaging youth in peace building, leadership opportunities and practical management skills.

During the 10-year civil war between the Nepal Government and the Maoists, youth were often a cause and target of violence as a result of recruitment into fighting and displacements.

By the end of our project, 32,622 youth were mobilized and involved in 820 village youth clubs, which implemented 808 community service projects ranging from community halls to fisheries. Other activities, such as sports competitions, cultural programs and meetings, also improved relationships among youth of different ethnic groups, castes and villages.

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**You must be the change
you wish to see in the world.**

~ Gandhi



Be the change