

This partnership has been made possible by technology grants from Cisco and a cash grant from its donor advised fund at the Silicon Valley Community Foundation.



TECHNOLOGY FOR IMPACT



AUG 2017-JULY 2018

Annual
Impact Report

Mercy Corps' Technology for Development (T4D) team collaborates with field teams and external partners to unlock new possibilities and reach more people through the power of technology.

OUR VISION

A world of digital inclusion and opportunity where the ethical use of technology empowers secure, productive and just communities.

Technology for Impact initiatives are under way in 17 countries



2018 ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

At Mercy Corps, we not only believe that a better world is possible, we're committed to exploring, uncovering and applying new solutions to make that possibility a reality.

Our five-year Technology for Impact partnership with Cisco creates an incredible opportunity to expand our capabilities and our impact around the world. With Cisco's support, our Technology for Development (T4D) team has begun building new partnerships, developing better processes and experimenting with innovative tools to deliver aid faster, more efficiently and to more people.

In Year 1, our partnership has already had a direct impact on more than 1 million people around the world.

Cisco's support bolsters our efforts to embed technology in a broad spectrum of Mercy Corps programs helping refugees, farmers, families living in extreme poverty, young people, and others facing emergencies and long-term crises. It gives us the ability to be more agile and future-focused as we test new approaches, learn from our experiences and apply what we learn to other contexts.

Along the way, we've developed collaborative relationships with peer organizations and other technology partners—all working together to accomplish more than any of us could do alone. We've also grown our T4D team from four members

to 11, bringing on experienced, forward-thinking technologists from the development and private sectors to advance our mission.

Together, we're channeling the creativity and passion at Mercy Corps into innovative, tech-driven programming around the world. Team members from across Mercy Corps bring their ideas to T4D and vice versa, reinforcing our already strong culture of collaboration and innovation and setting the stage for high-impact new programs we can pilot, refine and replicate.

In everything we do, we're paying close attention to the ethical implications of applying new technology when working with vulnerable populations. As we learn more, we're developing best practices and a point of view that we're sharing with our peers, leading the humanitarian aid and development sector to a responsible, ethical, tech-enabled future.

In this Impact Report, you'll find a snapshot of what we can accomplish through collaboration with partners like Cisco and a sense of the possibilities that are already opening up for the years to come.



Alan Donald, Senior Director
Technology for Development

YEAR 1 HIGHLIGHTS

1M+ PEOPLE

around the world have benefited from initiatives directly connected to programming in Year 1 of our Technology for Impact partnership with Cisco.

PROGRAMS IN 17 COUNTRIES

are benefiting from initiatives in Year 1 of the Technology for Impact partnership.

16 PILOT PROPOSALS

were submitted by Mercy Corps team members through our first Field Technology Testing Program challenge—we've highlighted a few of them in the Possibility Spotlights throughout this report.

Technology for Impact initiatives

The Technology for Impact partnership is a 5-year collaboration between Mercy Corps and Cisco. Cisco has committed \$10 million in funding and product support for T4D, along with technical expertise to support seven specific initiatives:

COMMUNICATION SECURITY & DATA PROTECTION AND PRIVACY
In collaboration with Mercy Corps' IT team, T4D is developing policies, procedures and best practices to safeguard sensitive data, protect privacy, increase cybersecurity awareness and share what we learn with the broader humanitarian community.

DATA-DRIVEN DECISION MAKING AND ANALYTICS
We're using sophisticated data analysis technology to integrate disparate data sets, identify connections and reveal insights that lead to more informed decision making and more targeted responses to disaster, conflict and crisis.

BENEFICIARY IDENTITY & INFORMATION MANAGEMENT
Working with a range of technology partners, we're informing the development of an ecosystem of integrated tools to efficiently identify beneficiaries, respond to needs more quickly, deliver relevant goods and services, track distribution, and monitor impact.

DIGITAL COMMUNITIES
We're scaling Mercy Corps' ongoing work in providing information dissemination platforms and Wi-Fi connectivity to vulnerable populations, including refugees in Europe and Jordan. With digital technology, we're helping people connect to information and to each other, building resilience and equipping people to improve their own lives.

FIELD TECHNOLOGY TESTING PROGRAM
With seed funding and technical expertise from T4D, team members across Mercy Corps have the opportunity to experiment with existing and emerging technologies in pilot programs to assess their potential in humanitarian aid and development.

SOLUTION DISSEMINATION AND REPLICATION
To extend the impact of successful technology-based programs, we're helping Mercy Corps scale digital solutions, providing advice, implementation support and evidence-based learning, and sharing information across our organization, with peer agencies, and with the wider technology sector.

FIELD NETWORKING INFRASTRUCTURE
To support tech-driven initiatives, Mercy Corps is installing Cisco's sophisticated communications infrastructure, ensuring our operations and beneficiary-facing Wi-Fi hotspots run on the most secure and reliable networking hardware.

AMPLIFYING OUR IMPACT

SMARTER, FASTER, BOLDER

Beyond meeting urgent needs, Mercy Corps works to strengthen communities for the future and set lasting change in motion.

Technology equips our teams with better tools and information so they can work more efficiently and make a positive difference for more people. With support from Cisco, we're designing and deploying new technology in our operations and programs. The result: streamlined processes; targeted, data-driven programming; and tools that can be scaled and replicated to make an impact beyond a single community.

In Year 1 of the Technology for Impact partnership, we've been able to expand successful programming, applying what we learned in one community to develop locally relevant solutions in others. We're also working with partners and other NGOs to build a shared, nuanced understanding of the regulatory and ethical factors we must consider when introducing technology in new contexts.

HIGHLIGHTS

846,000+

people have used Signpost, an online resource created by Mercy Corps and other partners to help refugees and migrants access critical information.

7 COUNTRIES

now have localized versions of Signpost: Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Italy, Jordan and El Salvador.

45 WI-FI HOTSPOTS

established in Greece, Italy and Serbia help refugees and migrants stay connected.

Digital connections create real-world lifelines

THROUGH ONLINE PLATFORMS AND DIGITAL ACCESS, PEOPLE IN VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES CAN BUILD RESILIENCE AND HELP EACH OTHER THROUGH CRISIS

A staggering 68.5 million people around the world have been forcibly displaced from their homes—that’s one person every two seconds. Of that group, 25.4 million have become refugees, fleeing their homeland in search of safety, security and a better life for their families.¹

Refugees often set out with limited information about where they can go and how to get there safely. Once they arrive in a temporary settlement or host community, they must navigate a complex, unfamiliar system to get the services they need and begin to rebuild their lives. In response to the 2015 European refugee crisis, we partnered with the International Rescue Committee to develop an online resource, Refugee.info, designed to help refugees in Greece and along the Balkan route connect to critical information and resources.

Cisco first supported the development of Refugee.info in 2015 and provided follow-on support in 2016 to help scale it into a global digital platform called Signpost. Now, with support from the Technology for Impact partnership, we’re able to think about new possibilities for the platform.

We’ve created localized versions of Refugee.info in Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria, Hungary and Italy. We’ve also developed similar digital platforms in other locations, including Khabrona.info (shown at bottom) in Jordan and CuéntaNos in El Salvador. To date, Signpost has reached more than 846,000 people. Future plans include assessing its potential in France, Mali, Niger, Tunisia and Libya.

We’re also looking at building best practices for collecting and sharing information across existing digital platforms

such as Facebook, WhatsApp, mobile apps, websites and blogs.

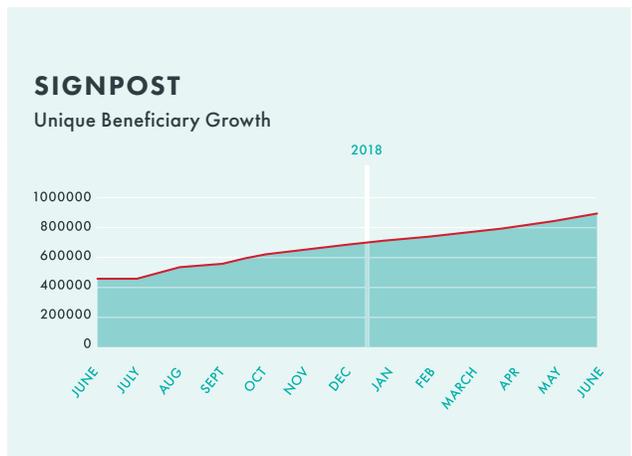
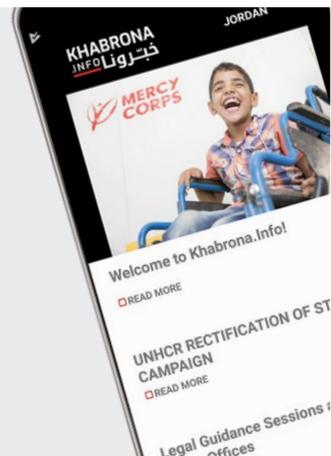
Beyond having the right technology in place, the process includes building a content-gathering team who can collect and confirm information, ensuring accuracy and dispelling rumors or misinformation people might receive from other sources. It also requires planning for how a digital platform will be moderated. In Greece, for example, we train and employ people from within the communities the platform serves to monitor posts and answer questions.

“The two-way communication is key,” says Meghann Rhynard-Geil, Technology for Impact Digital Communities initiative lead. “Not only can people ask us questions, but we can also use the questions we’re getting to create more relevant content.”

Moving forward, we’re partnering with Atma Connect to develop a grassroots, community-building platform, in which users share their own information about safe routes, supply needs and skills to help neighbors in need within a specific geographic location. Mercy Corps plans to support Atma Connect in launching the tool in Puerto Rico, where communities are still recovering and rebuilding after Hurricane Maria.

“The goal is to be as hands-off as possible, so the community is in control,” Rhynard-Geil says. “They’re the ones populating the information, which is really exciting because you know it’s fulfilling a real community need.”

1. United Nations Refugee Agency, <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/figures-at-a-glance.html>



Narrowing the digital divide with Wi-Fi

Access to the Internet has become an everyday service for much of the world—like access to water, shelter or electricity. It’s a gateway to financial services, medical care, employment, family members, and critical information for safety and well-being. Without Internet access, entire populations risk getting left behind as the world leaps forward online.

We’re working with partners around the world to close the growing digital divide by extending Wi-Fi access to vulnerable populations. We began with a program to provide Wi-Fi equipment and network management within refugee

camp in Greece and the Balkans. We’re now expanding the effort into Italy and Puerto Rico with funding and technology from Cisco.

At the same time, we’re collaborating with researchers at Harvard University to study the impact of Wi-Fi access on well-being and developing best practices we can share with other organizations. These include standards for the kind of data collected when someone uses Wi-Fi, how that data is used, and how Wi-Fi access can be provided safely and ethically.

“We need to be sure we’re bridging the digital divide in a fair and equitable way so that when we roll these tools out, we’re not inadvertently creating more vulnerable populations,” says initiative lead Meghann Rhynard-Geil.

Why digital IDs are key

A digital ID is like an individual’s electronic fingerprint. It’s a means of being recognized in the digital world and, as a result, the key that unlocks the benefits of the digital economy.

The World Bank estimates 1.1 billion people around the world—most of whom live in Africa and Asia—don’t have a digital ID, making them effectively invisible in modern digital life.² Lack of a digital ID can make it impossible for people in fragile or remote communities to open bank accounts, get medical attention, enroll their children in school, find stable employment or exercise their legal rights.

As a member of the ID2020 Alliance, a global public-private partnership, Mercy Corps is helping to lead an international effort to improve humanitarian aid and development service delivery through digital identification. At the core of this effort: establishing systems that work together and recognize digital IDs consistently across NGOs and UN agencies, while keeping beneficiaries’ personal information secure.

“Because we’re on the ground in so many vulnerable communities, we have a clear understanding of the complexities of different regulatory environments,



cultural contexts and other nuances,” says Rosa Akbari, Technology for Impact Beneficiary Identity and Information Management lead. “We have a point of view and insight to offer that other organizations don’t have.”

A global ID infrastructure will not only help more people access the services they need, it will help agencies like Mercy Corps track impact and deliver more relevant services. It’s also a first step in engaging more people in the digital economy, familiarizing them with tools, processes and resources that could then lead them to new opportunities in the future.

2. The World Bank Group, <http://blogs.worldbank.org/ic4d/counting-uncounted-11-billion-people-without-ids>



“The Cisco partnership gives us the freedom to think more broadly than expanding to new locations or populations. We’re thinking about other ways we can be communicating on digital platforms with our beneficiaries, and also how we can help them communicate with each other.”

—Meghann Rhynard-Geil, Digital Communities initiative lead

Lesson Learned

When scaling up means scaling back

THE CHALLENGE

Developing hyper-local technology solutions like the Signpost platforms requires a deep understanding of local challenges, cultural contexts, language, and the ability to collect accurate information on the ground. This makes replicating a successful program incredibly time and resource intensive.

OUR RESPONSE

With Signpost, instead of starting from scratch in each region, we’ve developed a Wiki playbook that equips any team with simple templates and proven processes for understanding local needs, the scope of resources needed, technology and staffing requirements, and processes for launching and maintaining a digital platform so teams in the field can create their own tools.

Stripping out the complexity and focusing on the essentials helps speed up implementation in new locations and get new teams up and running quickly.

Possibility Spotlight

RETHINKING DISASTER ALERTS IN NEPAL

In Nepal, seasonal flooding causes landslides that can wipe away homes and entire villages. Mercy Corps teams developed an early warning system for the area, using sensors to alert locals when river levels start to rise. Previous versions included automated stations that captured information from the sensors and triggered alerts sent via satellite phones and GSM SIM cards.

But satellite phones are extremely expensive and prone to theft, and SIM technology isn’t reliable in bad weather. Through the Technology for Impact

Field Technology Testing Program, we’re working on a new solution—moving forward using older technology. We’re converting the river sensors to use radio bandwidth broadcast signals, improving reliability of a system that could save homes and lives.

FUELING INNOVATION

TEST, LEARN, LAUNCH

Our goal with every program is bigger than change—we envision true transformation at the individual, local and national levels.

Technology has massive potential to remove entrenched barriers and create new opportunities for people facing poverty, hunger, economic instability and extreme weather. To harness that potential, we're experimenting with existing and emerging technologies to understand how they can address the challenges our teams see around the world. We use what we learn to inform and improve program design and bring new ideas to the field.

In the past year, the Technology for Impact partnership has given us the opportunity to test different technologies, pilot breakthrough ideas in the field and challenge our entire organization to find new ways to apply technology to solve problems and improve people's lives.

HIGHLIGHTS

13 PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

are now using Mercy Corps' Syria Incident Frequency Dashboard to understand where violence is happening and where people need the most help.

66% MORE

young male students attended our psychosocial support sessions in Jordan after we applied data-driven insights to extend programming.

\$300 MILLION

in cash has been distributed to beneficiaries through Mercy Corps programs. Over 1/3 of our programs are cash based, providing a tremendous opportunity to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of aid delivery through technology platforms and innovative partnerships.

Data-driven by design

WEAVING DATA SETS TOGETHER REVEALS INSIGHTS THAT LEAD TO SMARTER DECISIONS WITH MEASURABLE IMPACT

The quality of information we have about any given region, community or crisis has a direct impact on our ability to make a difference. There are multiple factors to consider, including geography, demographics, conflict scenarios, resource availability and weather patterns.

Connecting our program design with the reality on the ground is critical to ensuring we're working efficiently and effectively. It's also a huge challenge.

"Often, we're collecting volumes of data, or we have pre-existing open-source data available to us, but we're not able to use it in a meaningful way," says Ryan Fisk, Technology for Impact Data-Driven Decision Making initiative lead. "How you collect and process fragmented streams of data has a lot to do with how much you can harness from it."

In the past year, we've been working with industry-leading technology partners to level up our capacity for collecting, analyzing and applying insights from multiple sources of data. With state-of-the-art data processing and analytics, we're integrating multiple, disparate streams of data into a single pipeline.

The technology allows us to automate tasks that would have required hours of manual effort, crunching volumes of data quickly to reveal connections, insights and critical information we wouldn't have been able to see otherwise.

For example, in Syria, Mercy Corps teams have created a resource we share weekly with other agencies working in the region. The Syria Incident Frequency Dashboard (shown at bottom left) brings together data sets from a variety of sources—with information on timing and locations of air strikes, shelling events and barrel bombs. The dashboard

integrates that information with maps that show which communities are controlled by specific political groups and where communities are most in need of support. The result is a real-time picture that's crucial for the safety and effectiveness of teams planning supply and aid deliveries.

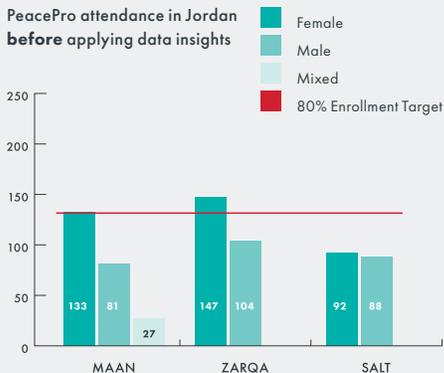
We're also integrating data sets in Syria to determine which communities need the most support to prepare for winter, analyzing data from multiple agencies and sources showing demographic information, climate factors, and prices of commodities such as wood-burning stoves and fuel. Again, we shared this information with peer agencies to ensure everyone could make more informed decisions in planning winter operations.

In Jordan, sophisticated data analysis has helped us improve programming in real time, leading to measurable improvement in outcomes. This specific program provides education to vulnerable young people at risk of radicalization, with a focus on stopping extremism at its root through conflict resolution and psychosocial well-being. Fusing multiple sources of attendance and demographic data revealed that the program wasn't reaching enough young men in critical population centers. By offering additional sessions, the field team on the ground increased male participation by 66% (results shown at bottom).

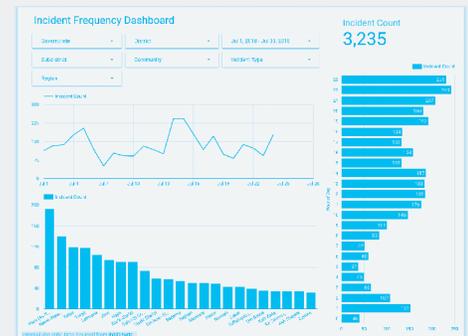
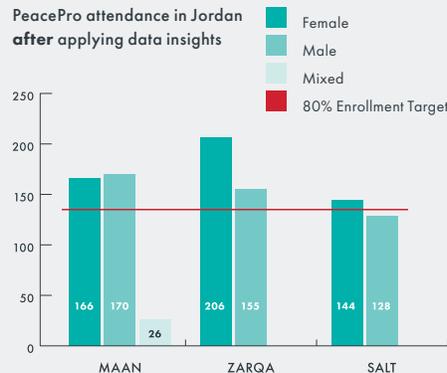
Moving into Year 2, we're training more field team members on how to use data fusion technology in their day-to-day operations, building skills across the agency to put this powerful technology to use in new ways.

"It's an iterative process," says Fisk. "We want to create a model in which we can do more in an automated way so we can scale to more countries and do more with data across our programs."

PeacePro attendance in Jordan before applying data insights



PeacePro attendance in Jordan after applying data insights



Magnifying possibilities through a tech lens

In the past year, T4D has played an advisory role in helping field teams apply for industry grants and competitive prizes for programming that uses technology to solve humanitarian aid and development challenges.

Our Jordan team recently made it to the final round for USAID's Women Connect Challenge, a call for solutions to the gender digital divide. Our entry is based on our work establishing mobile digital wallets, opening access to financial services for more women.

"It's an example of how we see technology not as a silver bullet, but as an enabler," says Jesus Melendez, senior T4D advisor in Africa. "We're looking at how we can help women take

advantage of these services to do better for themselves and, ultimately, their communities."

Another Mercy Corps team is in the running for a funding prize from USAID's Feed the Future program for food security. The prize focuses on efforts to contain the fall armyworm, a pest that wreaks havoc on important food crops such as corn and soybeans in South America and Africa. Our team is designing a new solution based on an existing digital platform, Wefarm, that enables peer-to-peer communications among farmers to help spread information about the pest.

"Our teams were already using technology in their programs, and now we can be even more strategic," says Melendez. "We can look at technology from an operational and business model perspective to find solutions that are sustainable over a long period of time—beyond a grant and beyond Mercy Corps' involvement."

You don't know until you try

Part of what makes Mercy Corps distinct is our commitment to tackle complexity head on. We spend the time and the resources to address root causes of crisis, rebuild stronger after disaster, and equip people facing adversity to be their own agents of change.

Working in this way requires deep understanding of the challenges people face and also the tools available to help solve them. Our Field Technology Testing Program empowers us to experiment, learn and envision novel solutions and innovative approaches.

For example, T4D advisors are working with the Mercy Corps team in Iraq to test the potential for virtual reality technology in post traumatic stress disorder interventions.

In Uganda, where refugee camps rely on expensive diesel generators to supply electricity, we're exploring an idea that could result in cleaner, solar energy for the camps as well as a new market opportunity for local power companies. Mercy Corps would provide technical support to help power companies build solar farms and connect them to refugee camps as customers, creating a sustainable, market-driven solution with far-reaching benefits.

Early explorations of this new business model revealed a much bigger opportunity for developing a solar power market in Uganda by engaging multiple providers—something we wouldn't have discovered if we hadn't taken that first step.





“We work in places where people’s lives could be put in danger if their private information isn’t stored securely. After an assessment of our own data protection efforts, we’re now developing a global framework and governance team to draft policies and procedures.”

—Jim Berry, Mercy Corps IT Director, Communication Security and Data Protection initiative lead

Lesson Learned

With big data comes big responsibility

THE CHALLENGE

Integrating various sources of data gives us the ability to understand our beneficiaries and their needs better than ever before. But there’s a dangerous flip side. Multiple data streams can also be stitched together to predict people’s movements, identify who they associate with, and potentially endanger people living in areas of conflict or under extremist governments.

OUR RESPONSE

As we apply new data-driven technologies, we’re paying close attention to the ethical implications that emerge so we can protect beneficiaries’ privacy as we deliver the support they need. Beyond personally identifiable information (PII), which could directly identify a specific individual, we’re also building expertise in the complexities surrounding demographically identifiable information (DII) and action-based information (ABI), which create a snapshot of groups of people, how they behave and what they might do next.

Possibility Spotlight

FINDING THE PERFECT FIT FOR REFUGEES IN JORDAN

At the Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan—home to nearly 80,000 Syrian refugees—Mercy Corps is helping local schools accommodate refugee children living with disabilities. This includes providing children with customized wheelchairs, desks, walkers and other assistive devices through a cash-for-work program. The program employs Syrian refugees with backgrounds in carpentry and blacksmithing to repair and build these devices using spare parts.

T4D is exploring a new way to build skills among these craftsmen while giving students better devices

to fit their needs: 3D printing. The technology will make it possible to create precise, custom-fit parts for any device while giving craftsmen experience in a new technology, thereby building their capacity for future employment.

“I have no doubt that once they get the technology, they’re going to be doing things with that 3D printer we never could have imagined,” says Ric Shreves, Field Technology Testing Program initiative lead.

GROWING OUR INFLUENCE

SHARING, SHAPING, LEADING

We learn something new with every tech-driven solution we pilot and scale. And we are committed to sharing that knowledge across the humanitarian aid and development sector.

As we work through challenges, uncover new insights and develop efficient, effective processes, we share what we learn internally and externally. We're committed to leading by example, bringing peers, partners and local governments together to meet the demands of the future in a proactive, sustainable and ethical way.

As our capacity to use emerging technologies grows, we're seizing new opportunities to engage with like-minded organizations. From conferences to consortia to collaborative programs, we're combining our strengths, working together to develop new solutions and establish global best practices in areas including privacy, security and the ethical use of technology.

HIGHLIGHTS

21 SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

over the past year gave us new opportunities to share best practices and lessons learned with external audiences.

15 EXTERNAL PARTNERS

from across the technology industry and the humanitarian aid and development sector are working with us on initiatives related to our Technology for Impact partnership with Cisco.

TALKING TECH

will launch in fall 2018—a new Mercy Corps podcast focusing on technology in humanitarian aid and development.

7 tech trends transforming aid and development

AS THE TECHNOLOGY LANDSCAPE EVOLVES, EVERY NEW SOLUTION COMES WITH COMPLEX IMPLICATIONS AND THE POTENTIAL FOR UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

1 Universal access and Internet connectivity

By the end of 2019, half of the world's population will be connected to the Internet. The other half will be disconnected from critical social and economic resources available online. Momentum is building to connect underserved populations, but there is still much to be done to close the digital divide.

2 Digital identity as a conduit

More than 1 billion people still lack proof of identity, leaving them out of modern financial, educational, medical and governmental systems and services. By helping people in vulnerable communities access digital IDs, we can also open the door to a wider range of services including government-sponsored social safety nets and financial services.

3 Distributed ledger technology

Distributed ledger applications such as blockchain are moving from idea to implementation in several sectors—particularly banking and finance. In our sector, we see opportunities for this technology to enhance transparency with donors and reduce implementation costs.

4 Data analytics and insights

The proliferation of technology and infrastructure for data collection, storage and analysis sets the stage for smarter, better-informed decision making and, as a result, a bigger impact for more people. As we do more with data collection and analytics within our programs, it's critical that we take precautions and develop frameworks to protect beneficiaries and keep sensitive data secure.

5 Artificial intelligence

Artificial intelligence (AI) has enormous potential to remove barriers and improve lives in vulnerable communities. One of the most immediate opportunities we see lies in the intersection of data and machine learning to inform predictive analytics that can help our teams prepare targeted programming in advance of a need. To apply AI responsibly, we must develop best practices for avoiding human bias in developing the algorithms that power the technology and ensure the data we apply is broadly representative.

6 Drone applications

With drone technology, we can map remote terrain, monitor migration and better understand the reality on the ground for our beneficiaries and teams. We've begun experimenting with drones in Nepal for surveying and agricultural research. As we move forward, understanding and informing local regulations on drone usage to protect privacy and security will be critical.

7 3D printing and additive manufacturing

Digital manufacturing techniques such as 3D printing make it possible to create parts and supplies quickly and affordably on site. This technology has huge implications after a disaster, when supplies may be difficult to come by and rough terrain makes delivery dangerous. We're looking at ways to build self-sustaining ecosystems around this technology, creating jobs while meeting urgent and ongoing needs.



Building partnerships with long-term potential

Mercy Corps is a pioneer in using cash for humanitarian aid, and we've been assembling a team of technology partners to improve foundational systems architecture for cash transfer programs. The core challenge: to help our teams respond quickly and improve tracking systems by creating an accurate, secure means of identifying beneficiaries who receive cash transfers and a streamlined mechanism to track the impacts of the transfers over time.

We're working with Simprints, a company that has developed durable biometric devices for use in rugged environments. The information collected on the devices—associated with an individual's fingerprint—is then encrypted and linked to demographic information through the CommCare mobile case management platform developed by another partner,

Dimagi. The secure, encrypted information will then be used by cash transfer platform providers like Genius Tags, who support electronic vouchers and, when feasible, direct cash transfers in partnership with digital payment providers.

As we get the program off the ground, our technology partners are learning about the complexities of integrating their systems and working within the constraints of humanitarian aid and development work.

"The support from Cisco has allowed us to create a sandbox environment where these partners can work together, tweak their technology and improve their support systems," says Rosa Akbari, Technology for Impact Beneficiary Identification and Information Management initiative lead.

A collaborative approach to cash programming

Cash can be more efficient, effective, secure and versatile for our beneficiaries, enabling them to make their own choices about what they need most. It can also be difficult to distribute and track accurately.

As we expand cash programming across our portfolio, we're also working to set standards for cash distribution. Mercy Corps leads the five-NGO Cash Consortium of Iraq, which also includes the International Rescue Committee, the Danish Refugee Council, Oxfam and the Norwegian Refugee Council.

Together, we're exploring ways to enable information sharing across a variety of agencies. That begins with developing interoperability standards and data collection frameworks that will allow our systems to work together to reach more people.

"For large-scale cash programming, if you get the right foundations, coordination and data governance agreements in place, you can have multiple NGOs working together to make a bigger impact," says Rosa Akbari, Technology for Impact Beneficiary Identification and Information Management initiative lead.





“We’re learning more about how to iterate, what to ask for from our partners and how to get what we need quickly. The technology gives us a way to get better information faster so we can be more efficient and more targeted to the people that need us the most.”

—Allison Dworschak, Humanitarian Leadership and Response Manager

Lesson Learned

We’re all in this together

THE CHALLENGE

Technology is advancing so rapidly, there’s a risk of implementing it before developing a clear understanding of its ethical implications. As responsible actors in the humanitarian sector, we can’t let good intentions and the drive for innovation obscure the potential pitfalls of applying technology when working with vulnerable communities.

OUR RESPONSE

Mercy Corps is actively engaged with partners in the public and private sectors to ensure we’re all moving forward together in an ethical way. We’re also identifying new ways to convene technology, academic, aid and governmental organizations in an ongoing discussion of how we can get the most impact out of technology while protecting the rights and safety of beneficiaries around the world.

We participate in industry events focused on ethical technology use around the world, including the ICT4D conference in Lusaka, RightsCon in Toronto, and the UN World Data Forum in Dubai.

Possibility Spotlight

SEEING THE BIGGER PICTURE ON THE COLOMBIAN-VENEZUELAN BORDER

Political and economic crisis in Venezuela has led hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans to flee, many crossing the border into Colombia. Migrants who cross international borders are often fearful of identifying themselves or applying for refugee status, creating an inaccurate count for aid organizations and host governments working to respond to their needs.

As part of a larger project to evaluate the potential of satellite imagery to improve aid response, we worked with technology partner DigitalGlobe on a pilot designed to provide a more accurate sense of migration flow.

We captured satellite imagery of the border in advance of the May 2018 presidential election in Venezuela, in an effort to understand the impact of the political event on migration. Cloud cover obscured our view during the pilot, but the experience we gained was invaluable.

We now better understand how to work with partners to “see” areas we otherwise wouldn’t have access to, allowing us to verify the number of people on the move, assess damage to local infrastructure, and improve aid response after natural disasters and in long-term crises.

On to Year 2

Thank you to Cisco and all of our technology partners and peer organizations who have helped make the past year a success. As we build our team, our expertise and our experience, we're more committed than ever to finding new ways to integrate technology throughout Mercy Corps programming to benefit more people.

As we look to Year 2 of our Technology for Impact partnership with Cisco, we're focusing on how existing and emerging technologies can advance humanitarian aid and development work in a few key areas:

- › **The ongoing refugee crisis:** Millions of refugees are now trying to build lives far from home, while more are fleeing their homes every day. We're exploring how technology can help make their journeys safer and provide opportunities to live secure, productive lives.
- › **Preparing youth to enter the workforce:** The lack of productive, stable work opportunities in Africa is putting an entire generation of bright, ambitious young people at risk of getting left behind as the rest of the world advances. We're working to engage and empower young people, using technology to build their skills and connect them to opportunities to fulfill their potential.
- › **Financial inclusion:** Digital identities, digital wallets and other mobile financial services offer unprecedented opportunities for people in vulnerable communities to participate in and benefit from the global economy. We're looking at new ideas for developing resources and connecting people to them securely.
- › **Ethical technology in development:** Our commitment to uncovering and understanding the ethical implications of technology will continue in lock step with our exploration and implementation. In the coming year, we'll work closely with our peers and partners to share information and learn from each other's experiences.

T4D TEAM

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Advisor
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Digital Communities

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Technology for Impact
Program Manager

Ric Shreves
Senior Advisor
Field Technology Testing Program

PARTNERS



CISCO

Cisco is a leading global provider of IT and networking solutions. With efforts like the Technology for Impact partnership with Mercy Corps, Cisco seeks to accelerate global problem solving through its technology and expertise to positively impact people, society and the planet.



ATMA CONNECT

Atma Connect is a nonprofit technology company that creates solutions to empower users. With products such as the mobile website AtmaGo, Atma Connect envisions a world where neighbors help neighbors prepare for disasters, improve access to basic needs and overcome chronic challenges.

“Mercy Corps was the first international NGO to see the value of a peer-to-peer communication platform in development and disaster resilience. They understand how to sustain and grow technology products, bring experience and expertise from the private sector, and maintain a consistent focus on providing value for people on the ground.”

—Meena Palaniappan,
Founder and CEO, Atma Connect



THE DEVELOPER SOCIETY

The Developer Society is a not-for-profit digital agency that works with NGOs and organizations with progressive missions to help make the world a better place.



DIMAGI

Dimagi is a social enterprise that delivers open-source software technology for underserved communities. Dimagi’s technology, CommCare, is the world’s most powerful mobile data collection platform.



HYPERLEDGER

Hyperledger is an open-source collaborative effort created to advance cross-industry blockchain technologies. The global collaboration, hosted by The Linux Foundation, includes leaders in finance, banking, the Internet of Things, supply chains, manufacturing and technology.



ID2020

ID2020 is a nonprofit, global alliance of public and private organizations committed to improving lives through digital identity.



INTERNEWS

Internews is an international nonprofit organization that works to ensure access to trusted, quality information that empowers people to have a voice in their future and to live healthy, secure and rewarding lives.



INTERSOS

INTERSOS is an Italian humanitarian organization on the first line that works all over the world bringing assistance to people in danger and victims of natural disasters and armed conflicts.



IRC

The International Rescue Committee responds to the world’s worst humanitarian crises and helps people whose lives and livelihoods are shattered by conflict and disaster to survive, recover and gain control of their future.



MICROSOFT

Microsoft enables digital transformation for the era of an intelligent cloud and an intelligent edge. Its mission is to empower every person and every organization on the planet to achieve more.



NETHOPE

NetHope joins the world’s largest nonprofits with technology innovators worldwide. NetHope acts as a catalyst for productive collaboration, innovation and problem-solving to reimagine how technology can improve our world.



PALANTIR

Palantir Technologies builds data integration and analytic software that helps organizations use data to solve their most important problems.

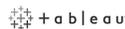


SIMPRINTS

Simprints is a nonprofit technology company building an affordable, secure, rugged, open-source fingerprint system that works in the world’s toughest settings.

“We are building more than a tech stack, we are building true partnerships to enable humanitarian response.”

—Sebastian Manhart, COO, Simprints



TABLEAU

The Tableau Foundation is a philanthropic initiative that combines Tableau’s two most valuable resources—its people and its products—with financial support to nonprofits that are using data to reshape communities around the globe.

“We believe we can apply the same technology and expertise that help our customers succeed to also help solve the world’s most challenging problems.”

—Tae Yoo, Senior Vice President
Corporate Affairs and Corporate
Social Responsibility
Cisco

ABOUT MERCY CORPS

Mercy Corps is a leading global organization powered by the belief that a better world is possible. In disaster, in hardship, in more than 40 countries around the world, we partner to put bold solutions into action—helping people triumph over adversity and build stronger communities from within. Now, and for the future.



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