

# Sustainability Policy

## Policy Statement

Mercy Hands is committed to working in ways that generate sustained benefits for the communities and partners we work with long after the programs and projects we support come to an end.

Sustainability in our work comes through effective, efficient, and impact-focused humanitarian assistance and development programming that supports locally led change that continues after the project or program ends. Sustainability is enhanced where development and humanitarian assistance takes into consideration the economic, social, and environmental needs of current and future generations.

Mercy Hands aims to achieve sustainability through supporting partners to build capacity and leveraging additional support and resources from the state as the primary duty bearer responsible for respecting, protecting, and fulfilling the rights of their citizens and those on their territory.

This approach respects the accountability we have to the communities our partners' work with and ensures that the work supports an enabling environment for positive impacts that continue even after the project is completed. This approach also maximizes the impact of the resources shared by supporters or donors.

Mercy Hands is committed to sustainability of change for the following reasons:

- Sustainable development enhances the capacity of individuals and communities to determine their own future and to increase the utilization of available local financial

and human resources. Development that is imposed or remains dependent upon outside support is not sustainable.

- Assistance that does not reflect the principles of sustainability may adversely affect the capacity of communities to achieve safety, dignity and justice and undermine the longevity of impact.
- As a partner-focused organization, Mercy Hands has an opportunity to extend the impact of its assistance utilizing sustainable development principles such as capacity building, mutual accountability, empowerment, advocacy, and efficiency.
- Effective development and humanitarian assistance that aims to share knowledge, skills and experience with local partners ensuring benefits can be maximized and sustained independently of financial assistance.

## Objective

The objective of this Policy is to ensure Mercy Hands adopts, promotes and utilizes sustainable development principles and approaches throughout its work in order to ensure lasting benefits for communities affected by conflict, disasters and displacement.

## Principles and standards

Mercy Hands is committed to provide 'sustainable, fair and equitable solutions that address the root causes and symptoms of poverty and disadvantage – sentiments that are also enshrined in the global Sustainable Development Agenda.

Mercy Hands acknowledges the best practice sustainable program guidance laid out in the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation, and the ICRC's Framework for Sustainable Development.

### Policy in Action

Mercy Hands implements this policy by:

- Adopting a rights-based approach:

- Building the capacity of partners and beneficiaries.
- Ensuring Environmental and Social Safeguards are central to the project and program cycle management process.
- Mainstreaming gender, diversity, and disability inclusion considerations across programs.
- Integrating community-based approaches to protection and climate and disaster resilience.
- Working in partnership to advocate for sustainable development outcomes.

## Scope

This policy applies to all program and partnership activities Mercy Hands engages with, including projects and programs implemented by our partners. Where Mercy Hands cannot apply its sustainable development approach in crisis situations such as rapid-onset disasters and conflicts, it will ensure a principle-based approach, until such times as early recovery programming is possible.

This policy should be read in conjunction with: Mercy Hands’

- Vision, mission, and values.
- Codes of Conduct.
- Policies.

## Definitions and Explanations

Capacity Development: Development which is imposed and/or remains dependent upon external support/ and/or results in unequal dependency is not sustainable. Transformational development enhances the capacity of those people and communities whose rights have been violated to overcome poverty and injustice and determine their own future by increasing their skills, knowledge and access to resources. New values and skills are also

required by those with resources and power to transform the culture of over consumption and lack of sharing of available resources.

**Empowerment:** Empowerment embodies the ideal of individuals and communities overcoming unjust power relations to achieve their human rights. Transformational development promotes styles of relationships, strengthening of community institutions and building of technical capacity which fosters empowerment.

**Project:** A project is a specific geographical and time-bound activity aiming to achieve identified objectives.

**Program:** Programs include a program/body of work that may include several projects delivered either in the same geographical area, or within the same sector. Whilst programs may have set objectives and indicators several partners may participate in and several projects with differing timelines and objectives may make up a program. Programs may also include specific advocacy initiatives.

**Sustainability:** can be defined as sustaining the flow of benefits into the future<sup>8</sup> and takes into consideration both the concept of sustainable development; and the principles of sustainable programming including partnership, efficiency, effectiveness, empowerment and consultation.

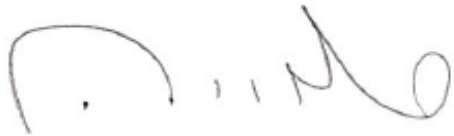
**Sustainable development:** development which that meets the economic, social and environmental needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs

**Sustainable Development Goals:** The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), officially known as Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, are an intergovernmental set of aspiration Goals with 169 targets.

**Resilience:** Resilience refers to the capacity of an individual, household, population group or system to anticipate, absorb, and recover from hazards and/or effects of climate change and other shocks and stresses without compromising (and potentially enhancing) its long-term prospects.

**Vulnerability:** The characteristics and circumstances of a community, system, or asset, that make it susceptible to the damaging effects of climate change and other hazards. Vulnerability can be determined by the interplay between exposure and sensitivity to a range of interrelated social, economic, political, governance and environmental factors.

Reviewed and approved by:



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