

COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION IMPACT EXAMPLE SERIES

INDONESIA

MOBILIZING URBAN COMMUNITIES

With over half of the global population living in cities for the first time in human history, community mobilization in urban settings is becoming an increasingly important issue for Mercy Corps and our partners. The Indonesia team has significant experience supporting community mobilization in rural areas like Maluku and Aceh. In recent years the team has found success adapting those lessons to programming in “urban villages” of Jakarta, one of the largest and fastest growing cities in the world.

Community mobilization has long been an important aspect of Mercy Corps’ behavior change programming in Indonesia. In the case of a large urban nutrition program, the approach was specifically used to increase diverse participation and strengthen people’s sense of community for collaboration on long-term development.

Mobilizing Urban Communities in Jakarta

Mercy Corps-Indonesia’s experience in rural and urban programming suggests that sustained mobilization is equally likely in cities as in villages. However, each setting has its own challenges and opportunities regarding mobilization and behavior change. For example, understanding the roles and relationships among business, government and civil society stakeholders in a community is important for any mobilization effort; it is more complex in urban communities like those in Jakarta because there are so many more stakeholder groups.

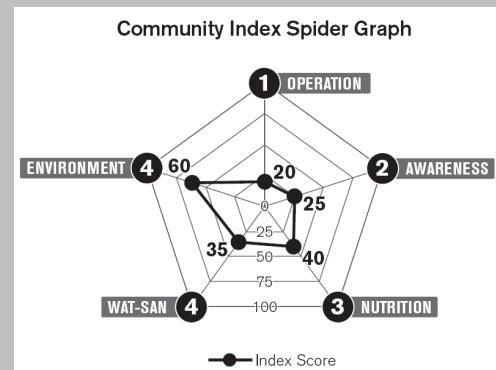
One experienced mobilizer reflected that the community mobilization approach is quite straightforward in places where community structures are relatively linear. However, the layers of structure in urban areas – such as how neighborhoods or regions of a city have different relationships to each other and the city government – makes mobilization much more complex. “In Jakarta this method is creating confusion. There is a lot of formal community structure – so Mercy Corps’ committee adds to confusion... (In order to avoid confusion) we have to carefully map the community structures and then use these structures as the working place. If the structures are not working, make a plan to make sure they are working” and then work through those groups to implement.

Key Differences of Community Mobilization in Urban and Rural Settings

1. Identity and New Ideas: In rural villages of Indonesia the sense of community unity and solidarity is strong because their remote location and lack of attention from government have meant that they must cooperate to meet people’s needs. However, concepts of participation and inclusion or the introduction of new processes often take more time to communicate and absorb in rural areas. Urban communities in Indonesia, on the other hand, are often more educated and more easily able to grasp new ideas, but lack identity as a collective unit.

Mobilizing for Urban Nutrition

Between 2004 and 2008, Mercy Corps implemented an urban nutrition program in over 30 areas of Jakarta. Community committees (CCs), with assistance from Mercy Corps, created a unique capacity index to measure progress of established CCs in target communities in five different dimensions: operation, awareness, nutrition, water and sanitation, and environment. Data was collected systematically during the project period and plotted into a “Spider Graph” that allows the communities to clearly see their progress towards the index targets.



As can be seen, there was a substantial increase of performance overall. In less than four years, nearly 10,000 children benefited, over 11,000 adult community leaders were trained and hundreds of peer groups channeled messages about behavior change activities.

2. *Focus:* Rural communities in Indonesia tend to mobilize a broad range of people from diverse professions and backgrounds and from across a village. Projects address a range of different sector issues during the mobilization project cycle. By contrast, urban communities in Indonesia initially tend to mobilize around an institution, such as a school or a water user's association, which may or may not affect as broad a range of community members. However, the need to work with other institutions or groups in the community can organically emerge (as in the profile below).

3. *Access to resources:* Urban communities in Jakarta have greater access to cash, while rural communities in Indonesia have greater access to materials and skilled labor. Urban populations are usually more easily able to advocate and press both business and government to release resources for particular needs. However, overall, rural communities are able to mobilize a greater total contribution, including labor, possibly because of greater feelings of solidarity among community members.

MOBILIZATION TOOLS PARTICULARLY USEFUL IN URBAN COMMUNITIES:

- Transect Walk
- Participatory Stakeholder Mapping
- Facilitation Method of consensus building
- Action Planning workshops

Mobilizer Profile

Anna Manurung has served her North Jakarta community for 19 years as a midwife and community leader "and for that long I never managed to find (a) solution on how to change children's incorrect eating habits, which has been a big problem for all of us here." However, after Manurung attended a Mercy Corps-organized seminar about a behavior change approach for improved nutrition, her frustration melted away. "I was so sure that this program is the answer we've been looking for to solve to our problem." Going home from the seminar, she committed to mobilizing community members in her neighborhood to do projects.



Manurung's community mobilizing skills led to excellent results. Not only did she succeed in mobilizing people in her own neighborhood, she demonstrated the impact and convinced the head of her area in North Jakarta to replicate it in other neighborhoods. Another part of Manurung's recipe for success is her commitment to including local "thugs" and drivers, who call her *bunda* (mother). "I usually go to their hang out places, make small talk and check out if they're having any health problems... I advise them on how to keep their health. Next time when I ask them for a sack of rice or cooking oil for (the project), they are more than happy to help".

To maintain the sustainability of the projects, Manurung recently started mobilizing kindergarten teachers. "They are the crucial players in maintaining the replication we have made." Together the teachers and public health workers identified the need to work with food vendors. "It's difficult to tell people not to eat in food stalls. What we can do is to teach the owners about healthy food and the impacts for the people," Manurung explains. Together these somewhat unlikely allies are successfully collaborating for the health of their neighborhoods' children.

A community committee celebrated the completion of a project with a parade through the streets of Jakarta.

Photo: Vanessa Dickey/Mercy Corps, 2008

This Community Mobilization Impact Example is one of a series included in Mercy Corps Guide to Community Mobilization Programming (2009). It was written by Vanessa Dickey, Health and Nutrition Advisor for Mercy Corps-Indonesia, with Ruth Allen, Global Advisor for Community Mobilization, Governance and Partnerships.

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

~ Gandhi



Be the change