



**Written Testimony of Tjada D'Oyen McKenna, Chief Executive Officer, Mercy Corps
House Select Committee On The Climate Crisis
Hearing on International Climate Challenges and Opportunities
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Written Testimony

Good morning, and thank you Committee Chair Castor, Ranking Member Graves, and members of the House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis.

My name is Tjada D'Oyen McKenna, and I am the Chief Executive Officer of Mercy Corps, an international humanitarian and development organization. Our global team of 5,600 humanitarians operates in 40 countries, where our work supports more than 37 million people, including to adapt to a changing climate. One of our flagship programs is providing services and products by mobile phone to 3 million farmers across seven countries to help them improve climate-informed agriculture practices - from planting drought resistant seeds to accessing innovative financial services.

While climate change affects every country on every continent, its effects are not shared equally. People already burdened by poverty, violence, and hunger suffer the harshest consequences, while having the least ability to cope.

Climate change is one of the main drivers of the global hunger crisis. Global hunger has been dramatically rising over the past 5 years, and today roughly 155 million people are experiencing acute food insecurity. Extreme weather events are reducing harvests, raising food prices, driving migration, and generating new conflicts, contributing to the reversal of years of gains in income growth and food security.

We have effective tools for solving hunger, but we now need to build climate change adaptation into the equation. For example, in Guatemala, where rising temperatures have contributed to long periods of drought, crop loss, and low food production, Mercy Corps has partnered with Colorado State University to leverage its predictive weather modeling expertise to help farmers make more informed decisions about planting, harvesting, and storing. And in Nepal, where changing weather has led to severe crop losses, we have helped farmers increase their yields by 61% through new climate smart agriculture practices.

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Climate change is a threat multiplier, sparking violence and conflict. Our teams see firsthand how interconnected conflict and climate change are. For instance, in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, where tensions were exacerbated by land disputes and natural resource scarcity, our FARM program provided community members with negotiation and dispute resolution training, empowering them to work with local authorities to establish a new land access and leasing program for thousands of small-scale farmers.

Unfortunately, the communities that need help the most are being left behind as the most fragile countries are passed over for 'safer' options. Only 25% of bilateral climate financing and less than 50% of major multilateral funding targets countries most vulnerable to climate change. And, in 2019, less than 1% of climate adaptation funding went to the 10 most fragile states.

It is possible to reverse the trend. Mercy Corps has helped millions of people worldwide adapt to a changing climate: sowing drought-resistant crops in Ethiopia, using state of the art technology to cope with flooding in Nepal and distributing drought-resistant seeds to boost harvests in Haiti. But we need the help of donors, including the U.S. government.

First, it is vital to recognize that communities urgently need help to adapt to the changing climate. It is too late to focus solely on reducing emissions. The U.S. government can demonstrate leadership by increasing resources dedicated to its climate adaptation accounts, particularly for the U.S. Agency for International Development. I was pleased to see the increase for climate adaptation funding in the pending Fiscal Year 2022 State and Foreign Operations Appropriations Bills, and I hope the House of Representatives will match the Senate's more generous proposal. I also urge the United States to galvanize private sector investment and sustainable climate finance.

Second, the U.S. government must ensure that its assistance is going to the most climate vulnerable places, and particularly to those that are conflict-affected. Adaptation efforts should be locally led, include a strong investment in digital infrastructure and have a special focus on smallholder farmers, especially women and young people.

Lastly, U.S. climate adaptation assistance should build on and reinforce our other development assistance to prevent conflict, hunger, and poverty.

I thank the Select Committee for its commitment to helping vulnerable communities adapt to climate change, and I look forward to your questions.