Global Communities’ agriculture and food security programs aim to improve livelihoods through increasing agricultural production and sales and enhancing food security for the poor. Our programs target farmers and farmer groups, small and medium agricultural enterprises (SMEs), rural and urban poor, youth, the food-insecure, and other vulnerable populations enabling them to effectively pursue profitable agricultural activities and escape the cycle of poverty. Our work occurs in a variety of situations and settings, including transitional and post-conflict with IDPs and refugees. We focus on three main objectives:

A cornerstone of working with smallholders and their organizations is **increasing and diversifying production** to produce a wide variety of foods that enhance nutritional outcomes and help them become more resilient to shocks. In doing so, a surplus and greater dietary diversity can be achieved, which allows farmers to process or transform their products, adding value and increasing and smoothing their income. We help farmers find the right balance between food and cash crops and utilize climate-smart agriculture practices and improved soil and water management to enhance resilience to both natural and man-made disasters. We directly address the gender gap with regards to agriculture and focus on women, ensuring they have access to productive resources and can meet their potential as producers in their own right.

To **improve access to markets**, we focus on processing, improving quality, adding value and developing market relationships. Taking a market systems approach means we help producers make what the market demands. We assess value chains in a participatory way to identify needed upgrades, which builds local knowledge and capacity and improves relationships between farmers and agribusiness. Interventions may include: scaling-up agriculture operations; strengthening farmer cooperatives; linking farmers to buyers and traders; improving access to market information; meeting quality, food safety, and third party certifications; and facilitating horizontal partnerships with business development services; accessing appropriate financial services; among others.

Agriculture & Food Security Programming
Improving **access to financial products and services** is extremely important for success in agriculture. Global Communities works both on the supply and demand side of financial services and provide appropriate financial services. Working directly with smallholders, especially women; we facilitate the organization of Integrated Savings and Lending Groups (ISLGs) whereby financial and adult literacy classes are taught and effective financial management skills are learned. We also work with a range of financial institutions to reduce the risks that inhibit the provision of needed capital to actors in the agriculture sector. We also work with banks and multinational institutions to provide loan guarantee facilities to lenders to reduce the risks associated with providing financial services to actors within the agriculture sector. We directly manages lending subsidiaries and programs in nine countries.

One approach Global Communities often uses to address these three major objectives is the **cooperative development model**. Cooperatives are one of the best ways to easily reach large numbers of smallholder farmers and achieve scale, purchasing bulk inputs at a reduced price, and provide a market access point for buyers. They also represent a willing and open audience to improve nutritional practices, strengthen democratic values, and promote gender equality all leading to enhanced community development. Global Communities has been a leader in the cooperative development movement since our founding in 1952. Our goal is to help smallholders overcome the challenges they face to becoming an inclusive and profitable business model. As an eight-time implementer of the USAID Cooperative Development Program (CDP), Global Communities has developed a market-based method for cooperative development that provides the theoretical background and a set of tools to compete in high-value market systems. We develop context-specific, capacity building programs that foster civic engagement, advocacy and resource mobilization and are currently working with over 70 primary cooperatives in Mongolia, Rwanda, Uganda and Kenya. Our model is based on five dimensions (governance, management, production, marketing and membership) that when mastered unlock profitability and development. This model encourages continuous internal dialogue on how each technical skill relates to the others to build an integrated, sustainable and profitable cooperative that is an agent for community development.
Another approach we integrate across our agriculture and food security programming is nutrition training and awareness. We support households to improve their knowledge of critical food groups and to cultivate and consume locally grown nutritious foods, with a particular focus on improving nutritional security for vulnerable women and children. Our “Kitchen Garden” model promotes dietary diversification using improved agricultural techniques that conserve limited resources. Located adjacent to family homes, kitchen gardens are designed to raise awareness of and to encourage the eating of complementary foods. Using improved agricultural techniques, such as use of manure or waste water and planting certified seed, smallholders grow a variety of leafy, green vegetables and legumes. Our complementary nutrition training includes topics such as exclusive breastfeeding, supplemental feeding emphasizing the importance of the “first one thousand days” of a child’s life, peer nutrition counseling, and raising and consuming small animals as a source of protein. Using best practices from behavior change communication, training is conducted by agricultural extension agents, community health workers, and community volunteers using a cascade strategy that allows learning and adoption of improved practices long after our programs have ended. Our methods take into consideration cultural and societal norms, particularly as it impacts women. Through this approach we help demonstrate the symbiotic relationship between agriculture, nutrition and water, sanitation and hygiene activities.

A final approach in agriculture and food security is our support to transitional, conflict or post-conflict zones. Global Communities supports countries recovering from natural disasters or civil unrest that require rapid response initiatives. Our programs are designed to help reduce food aid dependency, improve household nutrition, provide additional income, help smooth household food availability during periods of conflict or disaster, and promote self-reliance. We assess whether transfers such as food assistance or vouchers are necessary to prevent suffering and protect development gains; and, how we can effectively deliver services without disrupting local markets. Global Communities’ strategy often involves the use of food aid to vulnerable households, labor-based methods to reengage actors in their own recovery, and a focus on women. Program activities help re-establish agricultural production through provision of essential inputs such as seeds and tools; offer technical assistance on appropriate technologies such as urban gardens and rainwater harvesting; and in some cases deploy innovative electronic food voucher systems.
Resiliency in Northern Ghana (RING)

Ghana | $30.1 million | Contract | USAID | 2014-2019

Resiliency in Northern Ghana (RING) is designed to improve the nutrition, livelihood status, and resilience of vulnerable households through a multidisciplinary approach. RING targets 17 districts and coordinates closely with Ghana’s Regional Coordinating Councils and District Assemblies. RING focuses on the poorest households that have women of reproductive age and children under five. Under the agriculture and livelihoods component, RING works to increase access to and consumption of diverse quality foods by strengthening the interaction between regional and district technical units to deliver customized, cross-sector, gender-sensitive interventions to increase incomes and boost nutrition. To date, 15,454 people directly participated in activities designed to increase household resilience, including receiving support to plant soya, cowpea, leafy greens and orange fleshed sweet potato, small ruminants, village savings and lending training, reduce post-harvest loss, and improve storage systems.

Water Harvesting in the Southern Region of Honduras (“Cosechas de Agua”)

Honduras | $979,434 | Cooperative Agreement | USAID DIV | 2014-2017

Global Communities, together with the Honduras Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) and the Regional Center for Networks and Business Opportunities (CREON) is implementing the USAID Cosecha Project, a 3-year research project taking place in 39 vulnerable communities in southern Honduras that seeks to rigorously measure the impact of communal rainwater harvesting reservoirs coupled with drip irrigation on the incomes and food security of smallholder farmers. Cosecha’s goal is to provide evidence of how reservoirs, combined with ultra-low drip irrigation and improved agronomic practices, drive producer group formation, increase harvests and household income and provide social and environmental benefits. The program increases water storage capacity and farm productivity while improving climate change resilience in Honduras’ dry corridor. The program, which will impact 600 households, will also experiment with loan products to finance reservoirs and drip kits, and staff will survey farmers from the pilot reservoirs to measure spillover effects, long-term profitability and sustainability. The results will provide analysis of how the solution can be mainstreamed into policy and will also provide evidence for policy makers and the private sector of the costs and benefits of rainwater harvesting and insight on the best way to incentivize investment. The project will also contribute to a more accurate assessment of local conditions and predict suitability based on soil, climate, topography and other conditions.
Integrated Improved Livelihoods Program ("Ejo Heza")

Rwanda | $13,295,094 | Cooperative Agreement | USAID | 2011-2016

The USAID-funded Integrated Improved Livelihoods Program, known locally as Ejo Heza is designed to improve livelihoods and food security of 75,000 of Rwanda’s poor, particularly women, by building the capacity of low income households, mostly rural smallholders, through agricultural production, nutrition and literacy training programs, and expanded access to financial services. The program works with 44 agricultural cooperatives in the bean, maize, and dairy sectors and strengthens their financial and business management capacity by linking them to local services such as microfinance institutions, savings and credit cooperatives, training centers, private enterprises, trade and business organizations and local government. Farmer field schools (FFSs) for agricultural production and market linkages are the primary training methodology which are composed of approximately 30 individuals and are embedded in each cooperative. As of October 2015, 85,185 farmers had benefited from extension services and FFS; 48,112 of them were found to be applying new technologies or management practices on 1,434 hectares. To support more nutritious and healthful diets, Ejo Heza integrates nutrition messaging into adult literacy training with special modules on eating balanced diets, safe food handling, and child weaning and feeding practices. In partnership with other stakeholders and the Ministry of Health, Ejo Heza has helped develop the "Food Recipes Training Booklet" which is now used widely and has organized messaging campaigns on breastfeeding, milk consumption, anemia prevention and WASH. Additionally, the program promotes kitchen gardens with 11,637 gardens established by the end of 2015.
Agribusiness Investment for Market Stimulation (AIMS)
Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi | $20,041,030 | Cooperative Agreement | USDA | 2015-2019

In East Africa, USDA is funding the Agribusiness Investment for Market Stimulation (AIMS), a five-year regional program that focuses on bolstering agricultural trade by improving access to markets and financing, key constraints faced by agricultural small and medium enterprises (A-SMEs) engaged in agribusinesses including cooperative enterprises and farmer associations. The program will catalyze lending in Kenya, Tanzania, and Malawi using a $50 million OPIC-backed Loan Guaranty Fund (LGF) to provide a partial guarantee to six banks.

AIMS has three main interventions: 1) Business Development: Working with market-oriented service providers, AIMS builds the technical and management capacity of A-SMEs to address factors that directly impact business performance, such as management, operations, and accessing credit. Capacity building will enhance A-SMEs bankability and engagement in structured trade, and linkages to more profitable markets. The program has established relationships with hundreds of A-SMEs including producers, traders, processors and exporters and related support services including input suppliers, transporters and commercial service providers to deliver effective business services. 2) Market development. AIMS supports business to business linkages through strengthening existing apex organizations’ market information platforms and trade fairs. AIMS works with apex organizations such as the East African Grain Council, National Potato Council, East Africa Famers Federation, and Kenya Dairy Farmers Federation to build market linkages that promote formal trade agreements which facilitate access to credit and general business expansion. 3) Access to finance: Through recognized bank training institutions, such as Kenya School of Monetary Studies and Financial Access, AIMS delivers tailored training and technical support to lenders to improve their ability to serve agribusiness, focusing on risk management and products designed for this sector. The OPIC LGF reduces risks to banks to expand their agriculture portfolio, and reduce collateral requirements and/or interest rates. This includes improving the ability of loan staff to assess and mitigate agribusiness loan risk factors that directly influence credit decisions. Training focuses on understanding agribusiness dynamics, agribusiness risk management incorporating aspects on market risk assessment, cash flow analysis, and credit risk mitigation.
Enabling Market Integration through Rural Group Empowerment (EMIRGE)

Rwanda, Mongolia, Kenya | $4,963,187 | Cooperative Agreement | USAID | 2010-2017

Global Communities’ USAID-funded Cooperative Development Program (CDP) Enabling Market Integration through Rural Group Empowerment (EMIRGE) provides iterative value chain analysis to ensure that cooperatives are continually taking part in competitive value chains and are learning how to read markets and innovate to keep member participation high.

EMIRGE Mongolia cooperatives have learned how improving production methods can change the entire domestic market. EMIRGE cooperatives have together built more than 40 greenhouses for high value vegetables and 50 improved shelters for dairy cows. They have learned to extend their growing season by an average of 80 days and are able to keep their cows productive in one of most extreme climates on earth. In Mongolia, we have also partnered with the private sector to provide mentorship to cooperative leaders. As a result of this, three Mongolian cooperatives have invested in their own dairy processing centers and are developing their own products that are now sold in supermarkets in Ulaanbaatar.

In Rwanda, EMIRGE is focused on cooperatives comprised of people living with HIV/AIDS. Whether they are in groups of 35 or 1,000, these cooperatives are working together to increase the size of their land holdings and have instituted Global Communities Farmer Field School for Cooperatives. Cooperatives have increased their efficiency levels by 33% (as of December 2015) requiring fewer inputs to achieve even higher volumes of production in maize, beans, and high value vegetables after only two seasons. They are now able to monitor moisture content to ensure high quality maize that is sold at a premium in a number of public and private marketplaces.

In Kenya, EMIRGE works with youth in urban settings who are trained in specialty services such as IT to create worker-owned cooperatives capable of accessing finance, designing marketing campaigns and providing high quality services to an emerging middle class. Youth are empowered to create their own businesses and step into the formal economy by sharing risk and seizing new opportunities of their growing economy.
Developing Economic Strengthening Interventions for Group Production (DESIGN)

Uganda | $1,296,488 | Cooperative Agreement | USAID | 2013-2017

Developing Economic Strengthening Interventions for Group Production (DESIGN) is a cooperative development and research program that seeks to understand individual motivations for joining a cooperative. In collaboration with economist J.L. Morrow, of Birmingham Southern College, DESIGN explores what drives people to be “willing to cooperate.” This research has illuminated the motivations of a community and allows us to tailor the program to local needs. DESIGN has documented the evolution of how smallholders perceive cooperatives from having a general sense of perceived economic benefit to having a distinct understanding and practice of maximizing resources and lowering overhead costs at the household level.

Individuals in Uganda were three times more likely to join a cooperative for the expectation of a “social” benefit, rather than strictly financial outcomes. This illustrates the importance of “community” to small-scale farmers, and how successful cooperatives play a dramatic role in both household and community resiliency.

DESIGN cooperative members work together to produce bio-fortified, highly nutritious beans. After only one season of technical instruction, cooperative members increased their profit by 60%. Beyond earning more money for their families, DESIGN’s success improved the availability of iron-enriched beans in rural Uganda, boosting the nutritional status of communities and increasing local food security.

Improved Services for Vulnerable Populations (ISVP)

Rwanda | $36,997,332 | Cooperative Agreement | USAID | 2015-2020

Global Communities also built the resilience of Rwanda’s most vulnerable households through the $50 million Social Services to Support Vulnerable Populations (SSVP) program, known locally as Higa Ubeho from 2009-2015. SSVP employed an adapted Positive Deviance/Hearth approach to promote locally available, culturally appropriate, and affordable food products. Nutrition groups promoted monthly growth monitoring of children under five and offered healthy food preparation and household sanitation; volunteers conducted home visits to monitor family behavior change. SSVP supported 88 cooperatives with training and technical assistance to improve production and business operations, and managed 790 farmer field schools that provided training and offered agricultural tools, seeds and small livestock to more than 27,000 individuals.

In 2015, Global Communities launched a follow-on to SSVP the Improved Services for Vulnerable Populations (ISVP), known locally as the USAID/Twiyubake program ISVP will use many of the same approaches as SSVP to improve the resiliency of vulnerable populations in 15 target districts of Rwanda, with a goal of identifying 250,000 children, youth, and adults.
Colombian Resilience Program (ANDA)

Colombia | $28,600,000 | Grant | BHP Billiton Sustainable Communities | 2013-2018

In 2013, Global Communities partnered with BHP Billiton Sustainable Communities (BSC) to support poverty reduction among displaced and vulnerable people in Southern Cordoba. ANDA is targeting poor communities with special focus on women, youth, Afro-Colombians, and indigenous people. The project builds the capacity of 43 communities in six municipalities, and also supports 5,320 households and 21,000 beneficiaries in the cities of Monteria and Cartagena. It has three objectives: 1. Increased community capacity to identify and advocate for needed resources, services, and support from local government and government service agencies; 2. Improved ability of local governments to access and employ municipal, departmental and national resources to address community prioritized local needs; and 3. Increased licit, market-driven livelihoods and job opportunities.

The program, with support of local partners, implements a number of ‘productive projects’ which have been identified at the community planning level as priorities. On the agriculture side, ANDA employs the Farmer Field School model of training and agricultural extension to provide local on-farm training and guidance to program participants on growing short cycle crops (e.g. yam, corn, and cassava), horticulture, small ruminants, fishing, and poultry. To date 185 FFS groups have been created in partnership with the Vegetable and Fruits Association of Colombia and have included the participation of 5,180 farmers. FFS covers topics such as production practices, environmental protection, business planning, commercialization and nutrition. ANDA also promotes associations as a fundamental driver of improving the social fabric and developing profitable businesses. Associations allow producers to reach economies of scale, which is the only way they can move beyond subsistence farming. By the end of 2015, there were 13 official producer associations consisting of 422 people (180 men and 242 women). During the life of the program, 8 associations have been legally registered.

Off the farm, ANDA works to help entrepreneurs start and manage profitable businesses. The focus is on industries that provide a needed service to the community with low barriers to entry, including: manufacturing, baking, food processing, hair styling, painting, mechanics, and shop keeping, among others. Entrepreneurs learn relevant skills for running a business including technical areas, finance, logistics, risk management, administration, marketing, and commercialization. ANDA also has a focus on job placement, identifying job opportunities and helping the labor force, specifically young women, strengthen competencies to meet employer requirements. As of the end of 2015, 284 participants have been trained and 141 have been placed in jobs. The hospitality, tourism and cosmetic industries have been the primary markets for these jobs.
Improving Household Food Security (YFAD)

Yemen | $14,999,931 | Cooperative Agreement | USAID/FFP | 2013-2016

With funding from USAID’s Office of Food for Peace, Global Communities is employing an integrated strategy to promote food security among vulnerable households. Yemen Food for Asset Development (YFAD) relies on an integrated strategy involving the use of food aid to vulnerable households, labor-based methods to re-engage actors in their own recovery, and participatory decision-making approaches focused on women in order to develop productive assets that are owned, managed and maintained by target households and the community. Asset building activities include: household and institutional rainwater harvesting, agriculture infrastructure rehabilitation and kitchen gardens. These activities are integrated with behavior change communication training on hygiene and nutrition as well. YFAD targets more than 20,000 food insecure households across eight districts in the three governorates of Raymah, Taiz and Ibb.

Northern Syria Resiliency Program (NSRP and NSRP +)

Syria | $1,023,420 and $6,338,131 | Cooperative Agreement | USAID/FFP | 2014-2016

Global Communities’ humanitarian assistance in response to the Syrian crisis is anchored in a community-centered, resilience focused approach. Our methodology, along with our commitment to developing the capacity of our local staff and organizational partners, sets us apart in our work that we implement throughout Northern Syria. Global Communities has an operational base in Gaziantep in Southern Turkey, and works with local Syrian NGO partners to implement programming in Northern Syria. This cross-border approach of assistance delivery is a widely accepted model of assistance to areas that are largely inaccessible to international NGOs. Our approach maintains local, on-the-ground knowledge under a larger umbrella of effective management, coordination, monitoring and compliance that is critical for donor accountability, while building the capacity of Syrian organizations to deliver humanitarian assistance. We are also working with technology partners to utilize technology-based tools for electronic vouchers, remote management and data collection to enhance program monitoring and evaluation.

In the first phase of NSRP we:

• Provided 3,366 emergency shelter kits to conflict-affected households, improving the living conditions for over 20,775 Syrians, both Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and host communities.

• Delivered gardening inputs to 1,500 displaced families (over 8,813 individuals), enabling them to plant small gardens and grow a portion of their own food, reducing their dependency on emergency food baskets;

• Supported 2,085 small-scale farmers and their families (over 14,705 individuals) by providing urgently-needed agricultural supplies, enabling farmers to grow wheat and vegetables to recommence their economic livelihoods and provide nutritious food for their families.

In the second phase (2015-2016) we shifted to a market-based approach of electronic vouchers for provision of shelter materials and agricultural goods, empowering recipients to make their own choices about what goods to buy and where to buy them, and to support economic recovery. Additionally, we are supporting the local construction sector by engaging local Syrian contractors in shelter repair and rehabilitation works.
Other Programs

Global Communities’ has implemented agriculture and food security programs in Azerbaijan, Colombia, Ethiopia, Georgia, Ghana, Haiti, Honduras, India, Kenya, Lebanon, Liberia, Malawi, Mongolia, Montenegro, Pakistan, Rwanda, Serbia, South Sudan, Syria, Tanzania, Uganda, West Bank and Gaza, and Yemen.
Global Communities is a global development organization committed to working in partnership with communities worldwide to bring about sustainable, impactful changes that improve the lives and livelihoods of the vulnerable.

Development is not something we do for people; it is something we do with them. We believe that the people who understand their needs best are the people of the community itself.

For more information, please visit www.globalcommunities.org