

## PRESS RELEASE

**UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 9.00 AM EAST AFRICAN TIME (6.00 GMT) ON 31 JANUARY 2018**

### Powering an innovative fintech ecosystem for smallholder farmers in Kenya

*Mercy Corps AgriFin Accelerate, supported by the Mastercard Foundation, convenes market innovators and stakeholders to share insights and generate learnings to benefit smallholders.*

**NAIROBI, 31 January 2018** - Mercy Corps, in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation, today hosts more than 200 participants from around the world to accelerate the scaling up of innovative digital solutions for smallholder farmers during the second Annual Learning Event for the AgriFin Accelerate Program (AFA). Themed: **“Powering an Innovative Fintech Ecosystem for Africa’s Smallholder Farmers: Emerging Frontiers and Opportunities,”** the event features leading experts on financial inclusion from banks, mobile network operators, agribusinesses, tech innovators, governments and development partners from Kenya and across Africa.

This year, the event will include a digital marketplace, eight parallel thematic workshops, plenary sessions and engaging panels. Invited key speakers include executives from: the Mastercard Foundation, the World Food Program, Google, Safaricom, Equity Bank, FarmDrive and SunCulture, among others.

“In Kenya, our 2017 study of smallholders found that over 90% use mobile phones to access financial services and information regardless of education, gender or age and the use of smart phones is on the rise. Moving forward, mobile will become even more important for farmers to access markets, critical services like transportation and crop disease management tools – helping drive up farmer productivity and income,” said Leesa Shrader, Program Director at Mercy Corps Agrifin Accelerate.

Mercy Corps’ Agrifin Accelerate Program is a US\$25 million three-country, six-year initiative supported by the Mastercard Foundation. It is expected to benefit one million smallholder farmers across Kenya, Tanzania and Zambia by helping to close the gap in access to financial, informational and market services.

Olga Morawczynski, Program Manager, Financial Inclusion at the Mastercard Foundation said, “We’re encouraged by the progress Africa is making in technological innovations that will enable smallholder farmers to access digital financial services and markets more easily. We’re proud of our partnership with Mercy Corps which is contributing to the strengthening of smallholder farmers’ capacity and skills to utilize digital information. Today’s learning event demonstrates that we are one step closer to scaling up these digital finance innovations.”

The second Annual Learning Event provides a platform to showcase AFA partners’ progress in providing digital financial services to smallholder farmers, discuss emerging trends and opportunities for agile technology and engage on how to enhance last mile access to services for smallholders.

###ENDS

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## **About Mercy Corps**

Mercy Corps is a leading global humanitarian agency saving and improving lives in the world's toughest places. With a network of experienced professionals in more than 40 countries, we partner with local communities to put bold ideas into action to help people recover, overcome hardship and build better lives. Now, and for the future. For more information, please visit [www.mercycorps.org](http://www.mercycorps.org)

AgriFin Accelerate is a development program of Mercy Corps supported by the Mastercard Foundation. The program seeks to close the gap in access to financial and information services experienced by smallholder farmers. For more information, please visit [www.mercycorpsafa.org](http://www.mercycorpsafa.org)  
Follow the program on Twitter @MercyCorpsAFA

## **About the Mastercard Foundation**

The Mastercard Foundation works with visionary organizations to provide greater access to education, skills training and financial services for people living in poverty, primarily in Africa. As one of the largest private foundations its work is guided by its mission to advance learning and promote financial inclusion to create an inclusive and equitable world. Based in Toronto, Canada, its independence was established by Mastercard when the Foundation was created in 2006. For more information and to sign up for the Foundation's newsletter, please visit [www.mastercardfdn.org](http://www.mastercardfdn.org). Follow the Foundation at @MastercardFdn on Twitter.