



## GPC support mission to Central African Republic

28<sup>th</sup> February 2013

### I. Introduction

1. From 6<sup>th</sup> of February to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2013, Procap SPO conducted a GPC support mission to Central African Republic. This mission was initiated following direct dialogues with the field Protection Cluster and in agreement with the GPC Coordinator and Steering Committee. In the course of his mission Roving Protection conducted consultations with the Protection Cluster Coordinator, A.O.R coordinators and partners to identify gaps and challenges faced by the Protection Cluster to perform their duties and the capacities that need to be reinforced. In coordination with the Protection Cluster Coordinator he conducted consultations and meetings with the HC/RC/ DSRSG, the inter-cluster, HCT members and BINUCA in order to identify the level of integration of protection within humanitarian policy and response in Central African Republic. Based on the results of the consultations, protection policies, guidance and training were provided to the Protection Cluster. The main activities and outcomes of the mission were to provide direct support to the Protection Cluster for situation analysis, strategy and response planning to respond to the existing emergency situation.

### II. General context

2. Since its independency Central African Republic was affected by a set of political instabilities and military coups. Its development and institutional capacity has been extremely narrowed and population poverty endemic especially in its northern part. Following the 2008 Libreville peace accords, CAR entered in a peace building and early recovery dynamic. In 2011, signatory's armed groups joined a DDR process supported by the UN and started to disarm and demobilize their combatants, though, national institutions lacked capacity and political will and the large majority of combatants from those groups were not yet demobilized or socially reintegrated resulting to their active presence in some part of the country.
3. The country law enforcement and security forces also were deficient in capacities with only 1800 Gendarmes and 1500 policemen deployed throughout the country and 6800 FACA positioned in Bangui. This situation facilitated the activities of criminal gangs such as the *Zaraguinas* or "*coupeurs de route*" and the development of armed civilian militias. Furthermore, the country security situation was also impacted by the numerous conflicts affecting the neighboring countries (Sudan, Chad, and DRC) and the use by foreign armed groups of Central African soil for seeking resources and conducting recruitment, including children.
4. The judicial system was also ineffective with 80 magistrates over 125 in CAR positioned in Bangui and the ministry of justice budget reduced by 20% in 2012. In addition the government acquired delay in its engagement toward the domestication of ratified human rights bodies and did not showed great political commitment to do so. The addition of these different factors resulted in a general climate of impunity. The state of social services was weak, especially the public health system with only 200 doctors in country few of them being deploy out of Bangui. This condition led to international NGOs being the only option for most rural communities to access essential social services (80% of health services was directly managed by INGOs).
5. In 2012, the lack of effort made by the government to open political dialogue to opposition parties and the failure to apply the various peace accords resulted in the resurgence of armed activism and to the foundation of an armed coalition called Séléka (Alliance in Songo language). The new movement launched an attacked against National Armed Forces in the northern locality of *Sam Ouandja* on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2012. On 11<sup>th</sup> January 2013 following efforts made by the AU, UN and ECCAS, the Government of Central African Republic and Séléka leaders signed a cease fire and political accords suspending the hostilities and initiating the implementation of a government of national unity that was appointed on 3<sup>rd</sup> February and opened to Séléka and political opposition representatives.
6. Nowadays, the political situation and relation between the signatory's parties is still reported tense and fragile as the application of the Libreville accords did not enter into actions, including the bills having an impact on civilian security and livelihood (unconditional humanitarian access, withdrawal and cantonment of Séléka combatants, prevention of child recruitment, etc...). On 23<sup>th</sup> February 2013,

Séléka supreme council denounced in a press communique the lack of inclusivity into the transitional government and conditioned their cantonment to an increased mainstreaming within the government<sup>1</sup> and gave an ultimatum to the President Bozize. In addition, the different entities composing the Séléka coalition in the country are motivated by different political agendas and communal dynamic. They do not fully adhere in decision taken by the coalition leaders and dissension started to appear between those armed groups.

### **Political background**

- 1960: National independency.
- 1966: Military coup – President Bokassa.
- 1979: French operation “Barracuda” – President Dacko.
- 1981: Military coup - President Kolingba.
- 1992: Elections – President Patasse – Kolingba entered into rebellion.
- 1997: UN monitoring Mission (Mission de surveillance des accords de Bangui - MISAB).
- 1998 : UN Peace Mission in CAR (MINURCA).
- 2000 : UN Office in CAR (Bureau des NU en RCA – BONUCA).
- 2002 : Multinational Forces in CAR lead by CEMAC<sup>2</sup> (Force Multinational en RCA – FOMUC).
- 2003: Military coup – President Bozize.
- 2007: EUFOR Chad/CAR followed by UN Mission in Chad/CAR (MINURCAT).
- 2008: MINURCAT withdrawal – MICOPAX lead by ECCAS<sup>3</sup> (Mission de Consolidation de la Paix en RCA)/FOMAC (Force multinationale d'Afrique Centrale).
- 2008 : Libreville accord (accords global de paix).
- 2010 : UN integrated office for peace building (Bureau des NU pour la Consolidation de la Paix – BINUCA).
- 10<sup>th</sup> December 2012: A faction of the UFDR<sup>4</sup> led by Michel Djotodjia launched an attacked against National Armed Forces in the northern localities of Sam Ouandja, Ouadda and Ndele in the north eastern part of the country.
- 12<sup>th</sup> December 2012: UFDR was joined by MLCJ<sup>5</sup>, CPJP<sup>6</sup> and two new entities CPSK<sup>7</sup> and A2R<sup>8</sup> that constituted the Séléka coalition.
- 11<sup>th</sup> January 2013: Government of Central African Republic and Séléka leaders signed a cease fire and political accords under the hospice of the ECCAS and supported by the AU and the UN.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> February: Formation of a Government of National Unity including three Séléka ministers.

### **Armed actors**

- **National regular forces:**
  - FACA (Forces Armées de la République Centrafricaine) : 6800 staffs positioned in Bangui.
  - Gendarmerie : 1800 staffs.
  - Police : 1500 staffs.
- **Foreign regular forces:**
  - Tripartite force Chad/Sudan/CAR control and monitoring of common borders.
  - Regional Task Force (RTF) established in March 2012 between Uganda, South Sudan, Central African Republic and Democratic Republic of the Congo supported by US military advisors.

<sup>1</sup>Three ministers were given to Séléka: Ministry of Defense given to Séléka leader Michel Djotodia – Ministry of Water and Forest – Ministry of Communication.

<sup>2</sup>CEMAC : Communauté Economique et Monétaire d’Afrique Centrale.

<sup>3</sup>ECCAS: Economic Community of Central African States.

<sup>4</sup>UFDR: Union des Forces Démocratique pour le Rassemblement.

<sup>5</sup>MLJC : Mouvement des Libérateurs Centrafricains pour la Justice.

<sup>6</sup>CPJP : Convention des patriotes pour la justice et la paix.

<sup>7</sup>CPSK: Convention patriotique du salut du kodro (Kodro or country in Songo).

<sup>8</sup>A2R: Alliance pour la renaissance et la refondation.



- French military detachment: 250 staffs located in Bangui that were reinforced to 600 following December 2012 conflict..
- FOMAC/MICOPAX: 700 staffs deployed in the country.
- **Armed groups:**
- Three ANSAs signatories of 2008 Libreville accord and remaining before December 10th: UFDR – MLCJ - CPJP.
- Séléka (Alliance in Songo language): Coalition between five armed groups that include UFDR, MLJC, CPJP and two new entities CPSK and A2R.
- FPR<sup>9</sup>: Chadian ANSA active in CAR until a joined Chadian and Central African operation that resulted in their repatriation in September 2012. A large number of FPR combatants might have joined the Séléka.
- LRA<sup>10</sup>: Ugandan ANSA reported active in the South Eastern part of the country bordering Democratic Republic of Congo.
- **Other Armed Non-State Actors (ANSA)**
- Zaraguinas or “coupeurs de route”.
- Poachers.
- Individuals armed criminals.

### III. Protection situation

#### General Protection

7. Protection situation was already vulnerable before the December 2012 crisis. In 2011, some 35.000 IDPs returned home and 13.000 Central African refugees repatriated from Cameroon and Chad. The Government lacked national IDP policy despite its regional engagement<sup>11</sup> and the limited resources available in areas of origin embedded IDPs to access their rights for durable solutions. In November 2012, some 51600 IDPs and 163,000 refugees in neighboring countries<sup>12</sup> were still reported. In addition, 16,500 refugees and asylum seekers from Sudan and DRC were still assisted by UNHCR in CAR. In addition the country was affected by a long term human rights and governance crisis and recurrently affected by foreign armed group such as the Lord Resistance Army (LRA).
8. After the December events, Protection of civilians remains a major concern in Central African Republic, in particular (although not only) in the conflict-affected areas. There are reports of large-scale violations and abuses against civilian population when Séléka combatants progressed toward the capital and since the parties signed the Libreville accords. There have been numerous reports of lootings, physical violence and gender-based violence including rape. Child Protection monitors reported serious concerns that children may be recruited as combatants. Disappearances and abductions have also been reported and include children and women. In addition, civilian authorities and law enforcement agents fled from the areas that fall under armed groups control resulting in public administration disruption, resurgence of criminal activities such as the *Zaraguinas* and proliferation of abuses by armed civilians. Reports of destruction of the already weak public infrastructure and archives are also a major concern as it affected documentation essential for the legal and social protection of the civilian population. It is expected that a long term protracted situation with varied intensity and a slow evolution towards a degrading infrastructure, causing disruption of essential services, delivery and loss of economic activity, will gradually emerge. This will mean that displaced people may remain in displacement for some time, and there may be concerns as to the availability of long-term durable solutions for some.
9. From 14 January to 20 February, Protection Cluster conducted participatory assessments<sup>13</sup> in nine of the most affected areas<sup>14</sup> in which 88% of the population reported living in fear of physical violence and other abuses by armed groups and elements. They described their situation and threats to be:

<sup>9</sup> FPR: Front populaire pour le redressement.

<sup>10</sup> LRA: Lord Resistance Army.

<sup>11</sup> CAR ratified the Kampala Convention in 2007

<sup>12</sup> 3.000 DRC - 65.000 Chad – 85.000 Cameroon - 1000 South Sudan: UNHCR December 2012.

<sup>13</sup> Protection Cluster members conducted 88 participatory interviews with residents of affected areas, IDPs, and local authorities.

<sup>14</sup> Bria, Kaga Bando, Bambari, Damara, Kembé, Ndélé, Alindao, Batangafo and Kabo.

- 21% armed violence.
  - 15% restriction of movement.
  - 15% violence against women and girls.
  - 14% extortion including lootings.
  - 10% different violence including abduction at night, armed robbery, presence of small arms, destruction of habitat and fields, etc...
  - 9% forced recruitment.
  - 8% physical violence related to the consumption of alcohol and drug.
  - 7% illegal detention and arrest.
  - 1% forced disappearance.
10. Population reported facing threats from:
- 42% unidentified armed groups.
  - 31% unidentified armed actors.
  - 20% other categories such as Séléka combatants, inter-communal tension (nomads/farmers), street children.
  - 1% civil militias.
  - 1% National Security Forces.
11. Protection assessments showed that the most vulnerable to the threats were:
- 25% women.
  - 20% children.
  - 18% poorest populations.
  - 15% girls.
  - 13% minority groups.
  - 9% different categories from some religious leaders, elders accused of witchcraft, handicapped, those in possession of resources.
12. Neglected groups within the communities were also identified to be:
- 19% elders.
  - 16% handicapped.
  - 16% women.
  - 14% young children.
  - 13% adolescent.
  - 12% minority groups.
  - 9% other categories: orphans, poorest population and widows.
13. When interviewed on their protection mechanisms communities reported:
- 28% self-protection.
  - 17% humanitarian national and international organizations.
  - 12% religious leaders.
  - 12% civil defense groups.
  - 10% armed groups.
  - 9% local authorities.
  - 6% FACA, gendarmerie and police.
  - 6% IDPs committees.
14. The communities also reported access to essential services to be low: 76% not having access to health, 100% to education and communities generally lacking water/sanitation and food.

### **Population movement**

15. It is currently difficult to estimate the exact number and nature of displacements as assessments could not reach more than 10% of affected population, but according to participatory assessments a large proportion of the IDPs in CAR originate from areas affected by previous conflicts and insecurity. Many families have been displaced more than once and just initiated their return and social reinsertion. Protection issues among displaced children and families are becoming more of a concern.

as they are reported scattered in farming and forest areas where shelter and other resources are expected to be insufficient.

16. Interviewed IDPs reported that:

- 37% being hosted by communities.
- 66% fearing that they will not be able to return home in a nearest future.
- 24% facing cohabitation problem with host community

### **Child protection**

17. Community reported the situation of children to be a serious concern:

- 40% reported lacking access to essential services (health, education).
- 20.2% being exposed to forced recruitment.
- 18.1% facing different needs such as access to housing, water/sanitation, food, trauma and other psychological threat, exposition to armed violence and presence of small arms.
- 16.5% sexual violence and exploitation.
- 4.8% murder and mutilation.

18. The specific needs of children appear to be based on the population's gender dynamics:

- Girls are being reported in need of access to education, health, food, water, protection from sexual violence, access to protective space, protective rights, and freedom of movement, shelter and clothing.
- Boys in need of access to health, education, food, protection from forced recruitment, water, protective rights, and access to birth certificate, access to protective space, shelter and clothing.

19. Interviewed communities reported that 55% of children were separated from their families and the reason to be due to:

- 40% forced recruitment.
- 36% displacement.
- 24% others issues such as orphanage, abandoned children and children let under the protection of relatives, other community or specific structure (MICOPAX/FOMAC).

20. Separated and unaccompanied children are reported to be cared 62% by family relatives, 30% without assistance or by a tutor or neighbors.

### **Gender Based Violence**

21. Beside the direct effect of the conflict, Gender Based Violence is a serious concern in Central African society. 86% of population interviewed reported facing problem in relation to gender-based violence perpetrated within their household. As an effect of the new emergency population generally described Gender Based Violence to be expressed by:

- 23.7% physical aggressions.
- 23.3% psychological and emotional violence.
- 19.1% rapes.
- 17.8% sexual aggressions.
- 8.5% forced marriage.
- 7.6% deny to access resources and services.

22. The alleged perpetrators were reported to be:

- 63% armed groups and armed forces.
- 23% family members or relatives.
- 9% neighbors.
- 4% others, including those consuming alcohol and drug, uncontrolled armed elements and criminals.

23. 89% of interviewed population reported the availability of medical assistance to sexual violence survivors and only 14% for those facing other forms of GBV. 95% of interviewed communities



reported lacking psychosocial structure for assistance to sexual violence survivors and 87% for other forms of GBV.

24. Community reported that their coping mechanisms for sexual violence were almost inexistent or based on customary rules and family. Local authorities and law enforcement agencies as well as medical referral system were not described to be a common response mechanism for the population. In addition, interviewees identified the need for sensitizing communities and armed groups on this issue, and reestablishing public order as the priorities to prevent GBV. Population also identified the need to provide support to GBV survivors (material, psychological, support structures in town and villages), sensitization and support to women groups.
25. Regarding women specific needs, 69% of pregnant women were reported not having access to prenatal consultations and 57% to post natal assistance. Specific women needs were described:
  - 39% freedom of movement, security, protection from armed elements and access to basic services including health, food, psychosocial assistance, etc.
  - 32% sexual violence when collecting food, water and other livelihood activities.
  - 29% assistance to deliver.

#### **IV. Protection response**

##### **A. Coordination**

26. Protection Cluster in CAR is established at national level and was established at provincial level before the December crisis. Protection Cluster is currently led by UNHCR. Three technical working groups were established at national level: Child Protection, Gender Based Violence lead by UNICEF, and, Rule of Law, Justice and HR education lead by UNDP. Danish Refugee Council INGO ensures protection Cluster co-lead. However, co-lead agency currently lacks dedicated resource and has submitted a project proposal to ECHO for funding of a dedicated Cluster co-facilitator. As example, co-lead agency was not able to provide full time support to the different stages of the emergency response planning, with the exception of its agency programmatic planning.
27. Protection Cluster Coordination capacities are limited in CAR especially in term of dedicated coordination resources. UNHCR Senior Protection Officer is assuming the different roles of Protection Cluster Coordinator, UNHCR OIC in the absence of the Country Representative and her programmatic responsibilities vis-à-vis refugees, asylum seekers, refugee returnees and persons at risk of statelessness. However, a dedicated P3 level Protection Cluster Support Officer is currently under deployment to support the coordination. Child Protection and GBV areas of responsibilities are also lacking dedicated coordination capacities. Despite good commitment by Child Protection and GBV specialists, their programmatic activities often overlap with the sectorial coordination.
28. Participation of Protection Cluster members, including local NGOs and government counterparts are relatively inconsistent and low due to the lack of dedicated protection resources by protection agencies (in most of the case general programme managers are managing protection activities).
29. The level of coordination between the Protection Cluster and the UN Integrated Office (Bureau Intégré des Nations Unies en Centrafrique – BINUCA) is not sufficient. Coordination and exchange of information between the Protection Cluster and BINUCA's relevant sections (i.e. human rights, gender and child protection) must be strengthened in particular with regard to issues related to protection of civilians and gender-based violence.
30. Few organisations from the National Civil Society are integrated within the Protection Cluster. However, during interviews conducted with their representatives Procap SPO identified challenges for the Protection Cluster to build up capacity, especially in the aspect of their understanding of



protection and the motivations behind these organisations. Some of these organisations seem to be politically or ethnically driven, others only motivated by economical interests.

31. CAR Humanitarian Country Team lacked Humanitarian Coordinator for almost a year until recently. A new Humanitarian Coordinator was appointed in CAR 1<sup>st</sup> of February 2013. Since her appointment, the Humanitarian Coordinator showed positive energy in integrating protection in her work and supporting protection mainstreaming within humanitarian response.

#### **B. Information management**

32. Protection Cluster information management system is generally weak. It is lacking essential resources and tools for protection monitoring, profiling and data management. This issue has been identified as an important gap and the main priority for the Protection Cluster Emergency Response Plan (see below).

#### **C. Strategy and response plan**

33. In relation to the protection context described early, Protection Cluster decided to revise its strategy established in November 2012 as part of the 2013 CAP, which was mainly focused on resilience and durable solutions approaches. The current context and the new security conditions conducted the cluster to limit its scale of interventions to activities of identification and reduction of the conflict and armed violence effect on civilian population. Three specific objectives were foreseen:

##### **1) Coordination**

34. Protection Cluster coordination capacity will be reinforced through the deployment of Protection experts dedicated to coordination activities, capacity building and protection mainstreaming. UNHCR will deploy a Cluster Support Officer at national level, Child Protection and GBV areas two dedicated coordinators and an NGO a full time co-lead.

##### **2) Information management**

35. A dedicated protection information manager will be deployed and Protection Cluster will establish at national level and in 8 affected areas (prefectures) effective protection information management system, integrating general protection, child protection and GVB dimensions through:

- Protection monitoring system.
- Profiling and registration of IDPs.
- Information gathering on community protection strategy and coping mechanisms.

##### **3) Community based protection mechanisms**

36. Protection Cluster will focus its attention and approach with the most affected population through the conduct of activities to reinforce community's protection capacities and strategies. These activities will include:

- The establishment of 16 Community Protection Committees (2 in each affected areas) including Protection early warning systems.
- Protection committees strengthened with child protection and GBV prevention and response package of multi-sectorial interventions.

#### **D. Gaps and challenges**

37. Security constraints in the areas affected by the conflict and armed violence conditioned directly humanitarian assistance and protection response. It is more than probable that the Central African Republic context remain extremely volatile and unpredictable in the nearest future. Protection Cluster identified challenges and constraints to be:

- The limited access by protection actors to the affected population especially those displaced in remote areas (to date less than 10% accessible).



- The lack of resources (human, financial) available by Protection mandated agencies limiting Cluster ability to establish sustainable presence and to build its capacity.
- The lack of capacity to respond to new emergency (increase activism of LRA combatants, new displacement/return of population).
- General lack of funding for humanitarian assistance.
- Long-term disruption of public institutions.
- The protection situation and existing vulnerability prevalent to the new crisis.

Priority actions must be focused on:

- Reinforce protection coordination in the most affected areas. This include conducting an holistic approach to identify and respond to the most urgent protection needs of affected population, IDPs, children and survivors of gender based violence.
- Facilitate the access to the affected population by implementing risk mitigation measure in conducting protection risk assessment and analysis in affected areas prior to delivering assistance.
- Reinforce dialogue with affected communities in order to deliver the most adapted assistance taking into consideration security constraints affecting their environment.
- Agree upon the location and nature of the most urgent needs within humanitarian community in order to concentrate effort to deliver substantial assistance.

## **V. Follow-up and recommendations**

### **A. National Protection Cluster**

- Ensure an effective identification and response to the most urgent protection needs.
- Adapt protection response to the new operational environment of general insecurity considering the existing constraints and in respect of humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and operational independence.
- Facilitate the access to the affected population by implementing risk mitigation measure in conducting protection risk assessment and analysis in affected areas prior to delivering assistance.
- Reinforce dialogue with affected communities in order to deliver the most adapted assistance taking into consideration security constraints affecting their environment.
- Agree upon the location and nature of the most urgent needs within humanitarian community in order to concentrate effort to deliver substantial assistance.

### **B. Global Protection Cluster**

- Reinforce protection coordination by the immediate deployment of surge capacities (Protection Cluster Support Officer, Child Protection and GBV A.o.R).
- Reinforce protection programming capacity by the deployment of adequate human resources by protection mandated INGOs.
- Support advocacy efforts made by the CAR Protection Cluster in the areas of:
  - Humanitarian access.
  - Respect by all parties to the conflict of protection of civilian and integrity thus in respect to the 2013 Libreville cease fire and accords.
  - Resources mobilization (human and financial).