



Source: UNICEF

Central African Republic – Multi Partner Trust Fund
EZINGO Fund



Ezingo Fund

Annual Report 2021

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I. Country Context

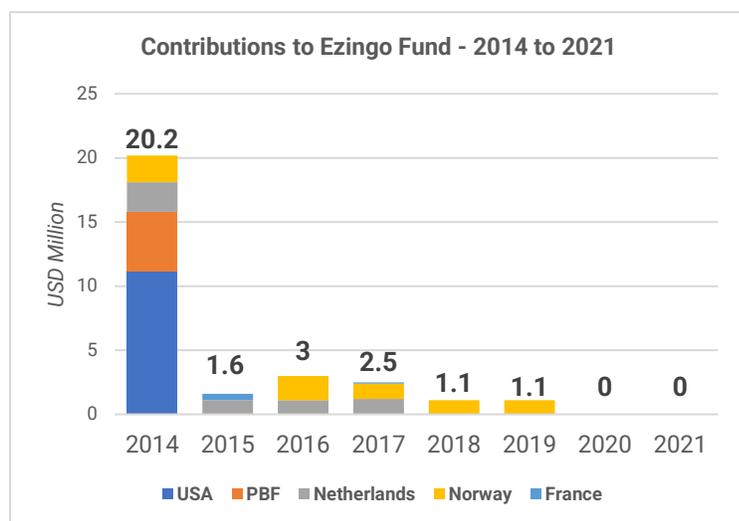
The security situation in the Central African Republic (CAR) has undergone significant changes since the end of 2020 due to tense elections, the deployment of bilateral forces, and an increase in attacks and clashes between armed groups and the Central African Armed Forces (FACA) in several parts of the country. Despite this upsurge in violence, the formation of a new government and the installation of the eighth legislature took place. Following President Touadéra's announcement to hold an inclusive republican dialogue, an organizing committee was set up. In response to the resurgence of violence and weaknesses in the implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation (APPR), the Heads of State and Government of the International Conference for the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) convened the Third Mini-Summit on the CAR in September 2021, resulting in a "Joint Roadmap for Peace in the Central African Republic". In response to the ICGLR recommendations, the President declared a unilateral cease-fire on October 15. This decision allowed the government to demonstrate its willingness to engage constructively in an inclusive political dialogue. In 2023, Central Africans are expected to go to the polls again to elect mayors, regional councils, and senators in the first local elections since 1988.

The Central African economy has had two difficult years due to the combined impact of COVID-19 and the deteriorating post-election security situation. According to the IMF, real GDP contracted in 2020 to -1% with a deterioration of the budget deficit to 6.3% of GDP. This decline can be attributed to the difficulties encountered by agropastoral, mining, industrial, and commercial activities, and especially those of the transport, hotel-bar, and restaurant subsectors.

Economic activity has been exacerbated by the post-election crisis with the blocking of the country's main supply route at the beginning of 2021. This created inflationary pressure early in the year, and economic activity then recovered slowly with a real GDP of 1 percent by the end of the year as a result of the efforts of the national authorities, with support from the international community. Since the second half of 2021, CAR's economic and fiscal environment has become uncertain, particularly with the suspension and postponement of budgetary aid from certain donors. For example, the IMF has suspended its Extended Credit Facility (ECF) program, setting up a reference program without financial support. This policy is conditional on the implementation of economic and financial reforms, the satisfaction of which could lead to negotiations for the reinstatement of the ECF program in mid-2022.

In addition, the consequences of the Ukrainian crisis have already exacerbated the CAR's socio-economic situation, particularly with the decline in household purchasing power due to the increase in the price of certain basic necessities and agricultural fertilizers. Together, these factors could reduce the level of economic activity and negatively impact the state's capacity to mobilize domestic resources as well as the IMF's forecast of real GDP growth of 4% for 2022.

II. Fund Overview



The Ezingo Fund was established in 2014 for a period of ten years (2014 - 2024). Donor contributions have declined over the years from USD 20.2 million in 2014 to USD 1.1 million in 2019. Since last year, the Fund has not received any contributions.

It is thus necessary to revamp the Fund and elaborate a resource mobilization strategy to ensure that its continuity and catalytical impact on the ground.

III. Fund Governance

In accordance with its terms of reference, the Steering Committee meets at least twice a year. The Committee defines the strategic direction of the Fund; reviews and approves funding proposals after validation by the Technical Secretariat; and approves the direct costs related to the operation of the Fund that have been incurred by the Technical Secretariat.

1. Steering Committee meeting of 30 June 2021

The Steering Committee met once in 2021. Chaired by the Ministry of Economy, Planning and International Cooperation (MEPCI) and the UN Resident Coordinator's Office, the future of the fund was put into discussion. As the Fund struggles to mobilize necessary resources to have a strategic impact on the ground, it was decided to explore the options to revamp or close it. The Co-presidents of the Steering Committee recommended that the Ezingo Technical Secretariat, in collaboration with the UN Resident Coordinator's Office, conduct a mapping of the donors in the CAR and suggest a new strategic orientation for the Fund. Details of this exercise are provided in the 'Perspectives' section of the present report.

2. Operating budget of the Technical Secretariat

The Committee approved the Technical Secretariat budget of USD 391 734 for the period July 2020 to June 2021. This budget covered administrative costs and resource mobilization missions. Due to lack of funding, the contract of the Fund Manager could not be renewed. The Technical Secretariat of the Fund is currently ensured by a member of the UN Resident Coordinator's Office until the Steering Committee takes a decision on the future of the Fund.

IV. Results of 2021 Portfolio

In 2021, five Ezingo-funded projects were still under implementation. Below is a summary of their objectives and results.

1. Round 6 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS)

“Support for the implementation of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) Round 6” is a project implemented by UNICEF. MICS is designed to collect estimates on key indicators that are used to assess the situation of children and women. Over the past 20 years, it has evolved to meet changing data needs, growing from 28 indicators in the first round to 200 indicators in the current sixth round and becoming a major source of data on child protection and early childhood education and a major source of data on child health and nutrition. In addition to being a data collection tool for generating data to monitor progress toward national goals and global commitments to promote the well-being of children, MICS was a critical source of data for the UN Secretary-General's final report on progress toward the SDGs.

In 2016, the CAR Government expressed its intention to conduct the sixth generation MICS



Source: UNICEF

survey. By explicitly taking into account the SDG indicators, this survey is a unique opportunity to provide the country with baseline data to then measure progress towards achieving the SDGs. It is also an opportunity to monitor the objectives of the RCPA and to provide sectoral planning with the necessary levers to guide social development policies. The other advantage of this survey is that it is capable, under certain rigorous methodological assumptions, of reporting on the impact of the crisis on social indicators through reflective comparisons between their previous

values and those obtained during the 2018 MICS.

Results

This project, started since 2018, resulted in the publication of the final MICS report in the end of 2020. In 2021, the statistical snapshots were produced, printed, and distributed to partners.

2. Strengthen the Resilience of Adolescents and Youth



Source: FAO

“Program for building the resilience of adolescents and youth” seeks to: (i) reduce youth unemployment and the violence that often stems from frustration at being excluded from the labor market; and (ii) increase the youth participation in the socio-economic development of their communities.

The main objective of the project is to contribute to the positive transformation of at least 27 600 adolescents and youth, so that they are able to

animate the economic landscape of the country, as defined in RCPCA in the 28 sub-prefectures of the CAR affected by the crisis.

Results

- 485 young people had access to learning opportunities and vocational training adapted to market needs. Of these, 200 are trained in entrepreneurship and formed into groups in Bangui, Bouar, Bossangoa and Bambari;
- Community activities were identified and implemented in a participatory manner. 550 young people (men and women) are mobilized around road rehabilitation activities, gutter cleaning, and construction of community infrastructures in Berberati, Bangassou, and Mobaye;
- A total of 71 economic interest groups have been formed, formalized and provided with IGA start-up kits;
- Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises and the Promotion of the Private Sector was supported to go on a peer-learning mission in Rabat, Morocco to develop handicraft sector;
- Ministry of Youth Promotion, Sports and Civic Education was supported to participate in the Youth Connekt Africa 2021 edition in Accra, Ghana.

3. Cities and HIV/AIDS – Vulnerability among IDPs and Host Communities



Source: UNAIDS

“Cities and HIV/AIDS” is a joint project implemented by IOM and UNAIDS. It aims to reduce the vulnerability of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and host populations to HIV/AIDS in five selected cities: Bangui, Bimbo, Begoua, Bambari and Obo. The project focus mainly on: (i) training of people living with HIV - and other civil society groups - to carry out advocacy in the fight against HIV through local dialogues, social

mobilization activities, radio and television programs; and (ii) income generating activities and cash transfers to single parents, widows and guardians of orphans who are affected by HIV/AIDS.

Results

- Advocacy missions were organized in the project areas of Bangui, Bimbo, Begoua, Bambari and Obo to assess the needs of people living with HIV/AIDS, inform the authorities about the project and sensitize the population about COVID-19;
- 300 t-shirts and 20 phalluses were made respectively as part of the HIV/AIDS awareness campaign;
- Out of 10 000 people targeted, 2 000 have been screened in Bangui, Bimbo and Begoua, while activities in Bambari and Obo have not yet started due to difficulties related to the issue of expired kits;
- 42 000 packages of condoms were distributed in the project areas;
- A series of programs are broadcast on radio and television stations on HIV/AIDS and COVID-19;
- 3 offices of the Networks of People Living with HIV in Bambari, Obo and Bangui were restructured and organized in order to make them operational and visible in the response and prevention of HIV/AIDS. These are the offices in Bambari, Obo and Bangui.

4. Women's Watch Platforms for Inclusive and Peaceful Elections



Source: UN Women

The “Bangondo ti a wali” project is an initiative of the African Women Leaders Network (AWLN) supported by UN Women, UNFPA, UNDP and MINUSCA. It seeks to address the challenge of very low representation of women in decision-making bodies in CAR. As the country was preparing the 2020/2021 legislative election, the project offers a program for the establishment of a women’s watch platform to contribute to the improvement of Central African electoral processes by promoting a democratic and civic culture among women and girls.

The project has two objectives: (i) women’s participation in the 2020/2021 elections as voters, candidates and major actors in the organization as well as the observation of elections in CAR; and (ii) GBV, including sexual violence, is identified and survivors receive appropriate care.

Results

- The female representation rate has increased to an average of 40% in many national institutions. Following a decision by the Constitutional Court, the percentage of women’s representation in the National Assembly increased: from 11 women deputies in the last legislature to 18 women, i.e., 7 more women, bringing the proportion of women to 13.4%;
- A technical workshop, gathering 33 women and 4 men from women’s organizations, women’s sections of political parties, the Assembly National Assembly, the Ministry for the Promotion of Women and the National Elections Authority, led to the elaboration of the charter of women’s political participation in CAR;
- A vast network of awareness and civic education with the presence of 850 community volunteers were put in place;
- 967 women candidates were trained on campaigning and resource mobilization strategies. The beneficiaries of the trainings were briefed on the legal electoral framework, the elaboration of campaign programs, the definition of electoral campaign strategies, the techniques of resource mobilization, the techniques of public speaking, etc;
- In partnership with MINUSCA (UNPOL), a general emergency green line was established to protect the civilians, especially women candidates and voters, by collecting GBV-related complaints.

5. Response to COVID-19



Source: UN Women

“Support to the COVID-19 response in CAR” is a joint project implemented by IOM, UNAIDS, UNDP and UN Women. It seeks to achieve the following results:

Outcome 1: The local population has a better understanding of COVID-19 and preventive measures

Outcome 2: The socio-economic resilience of the affected population is strengthened

Outcome 3: The local population is referred to mental health and psychosocial support services to reduce the negative impact of violence and crises, including COVID-19.

In 2021, community awareness-raising activities, particularly via radio, were organized in Bouar and Berberati as well as in Bangui and Mbaïki; women's groups belonging to the most vulnerable segments of the population were supported in the implementation of IGAs (training and purchase of kits); and several medical and paramedical staff in Bouar and Berberati were trained in the management of psychosocial distress and the provision of psychological first aid.

Results

- A capacity-building workshop for more than 250 representatives of local authorities, community leaders and civil society organizations on the prevention of COVID-19 and the fight against domestic violence and other GBV was held (150 in Bangui, 90 in Mbaiki and 100 in Bouar);
- 32 women's associations, i.e. 160 people, leaders of the associations have been trained in the manufacture of antiseptic soap and liquid soap; these leaders will in turn train their members on the basis of the kits received to reach 756 women;
- 14 women's groups (more than 25 members) of which 10 in Bangui and Mbaïki and 4 in Bouar have benefited from financial support in order to develop sustainable IGAs after the trainings and have been provided with kits for the establishment of Village Savings and Credit Associations (VSCA);
- 475 ecological handwashing kits made of clay (composed of a pot, a bowl, a lid and a soap holder) were purchased and provided to the most vulnerable households, led by women and spaces with a large female population for prevention at COVID-19 (in Bangui and Mbaïki);
- 200 ecological clay-based handwashing kits were purchased and provided to the most vulnerable households, led by women and women's spaces for prevention at COVID-19 in Bouar.

V. Perspectives

2021 was characterized by the UN's efforts to support the government and people of the CAR to address successive crises. The UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) – succeeding the UNDAF+ - will be the compass of the UN strategy between 2023 and 2027. Given the scarcity of resources that the CAR is struggling with, Ezingo Fund could play a catalytical role, acting as a strategic development financing tool. In line with the spirit of the UN Development System reform, it could build synergies between different UNCT entities, improve coordination, and maximize funding for SDGs.

The Steering Committee meeting of 30 June 2021 recommended that the Technical Secretariat make suggestions to revamp and give a fresh strategic orientation to the Fund. The implementation of UNSDCF provides this momentum. The UNSDCF includes 4 strategic priorities, which are each translated into SDG-oriented outcomes.

Peace - Promotion of peace, security, human rights and the rule of law

Population - Inclusion and equitable access to quality basic social services

Prosperity - Skills development and accelerated, inclusive and sustainable economic growth

Planet - Environmental sustainability and resilience to crises and the effects of climate change

In addition, the UN System set collective outcomes that will not only strengthen integration between MINUSCA and UNCT, but also optimize partnerships. Given the country context, the following outcomes are identified:

Collective outcome 1: by 2027, the reintegration of ex-combatants, including female ex-combatants, ex-combatants not eligible for the PNDDRR, youth associated with armed groups, and former child soldiers, into host and resettlement communities is effective, thanks to their participation in the rehabilitation of socio-economic infrastructure, the revival of the local economy, conflict prevention, and peacebuilding

Collective outcome 2: by 2027, the most vulnerable people living in convergence and/or crisis-affected areas regain their basic rights without discrimination, and have access to sustainable basic social services, livelihoods, and economic opportunities

The Ezingo Fund is the optimal mechanism to support the implementation of the UNSDCF and especially its collective outcomes. This addresses the recommendation of the Steering Committee to suggest a fresh strategic orientation for the Fund. It is necessary to map the donors and their priorities to ensure that the Ezingo Fund gets the necessary buy in and is fit-for-purpose.