**Progress and Utilisation Report**

**for CAR UN Peacebuilding Fund**

**(UNDP/MDTF–USA Administrative Services Section)**

**Child Recruitment Prevention and Community-Based Reintegration of Demobilised Children and other Children Affected by Armed Conflict in Central African Repbulic**

**(PBA: SC/2009/0054)**

**I. Purpose**

**Period Covered: Feburary - December 2009**

**Submission Date: 31 March 2010**

Country profile

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Key facts and figures |  |
| Population | 4,339,000 |
| Human Development Index Rank | 179 of 182 |
| People affected by violence | 1,000,000 |
| Refugees in Chad, Cameroon and Sudan | 137,000 |
| Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) | 162,000 |
| GNI per capita | US $410 |
| Life expectancy at birth | 47 years |
| Infant Mortality Rate (per 1,000) | 115 |
| Child <5 Mortality Rate (per 1,000) | 173 |
| Maternal Mortality Rate (per 100,000) | 980 |
| People living on below US$1.25/day | 62% |
| Population with access to sanitation facilities | 31% |
| Children fully immunised | 32% |
| HIV overall prevalence | 6.3% |
| Global Acute Malnutrition | 12% |
| Global Chronic Malnutrition | 43% |
| Adult literacy rate | 49% |
| Primary School Enrolment (net) | 59% |

Ranked 179th of 182 on the Human Development Index (UNDP 2009), the Central African Republic (CAR) is one of the poorest countries in the world.

Landlocked and encircled on three sides by countries in the midst of long-running wars, CAR is suffering from a multifaceted crisis where ongoing waves of violence combine with fierce poverty. Despite increased stability in 2008, 2009 has seen resurgence in violence and displacement across the North, with continuing conflicts with rebel groups and increasing ethnic tensions. These tensions have resulted in the displacement of the population and near total destruction of the already under-developed infrastructure.

Although the peace process has been advancing and the December 2008 Inclusive Political Dialogue was successful in bringing together all relevant political actors, thousands remain displaced and are living in chronic poverty and insecurity. It is estimated that of the one million people in CAR affected by conflict, some 137,000 have fled into neighbouring Cameroon, Chad and Sudan, and 162,000 are internally displaced. In return, CAR has received thousands of refugees from the neighbouring conflicts in Sudan and Chad and most recently from the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of Congo.

Current figures estimate that of the 1,000,000 people (almost a quarter of the population) in CAR directly or indirectly affected by conflict. The looting and burning of entire villages and the forced displacement of populations by armed groups mean many women and children are forced to live in fear, hiding in the bush.

Despite some modest improvements over the past few years, the country has some of the continent’s worst child survival indicators. Primary and secondary education insfrastructure is either limited or non-existent and the quality of education provided is very poor. There are traditional and cultural barriers to adolescent-led initiatives due to the weak microeconomic environment in the districts hosting the displaced population, and adolescents in response to these conditions are at increasing risk of joining the the rebel factions or the local militia, or engage in transactional sex. Such choices would expose them to risk of violence, including unwanted pregnancy, STDs and HIV&AIDS.

Elections expected in early 2010 might be postponed or troubled, which is creating concern among observers and intensifying a general sense of uncertainty.

Throughout the country the absence of development, poor access to basic services and lack of economic and social opportunities add to an already fragile situation. Despite some modest humanitarian improvements over the past few years, the situation of children in CAR continues to be of great concern to UNICEF. With an infant mortality rate of 115 per 1,000 and an under-five mortality rate of 173 per 1,000, the country has some of the world’s worst child survival indicators.

## Map of the Central African Republic



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## Description of the problems addressed by the programme

Due to prevailing insecurity throughout the North and a prolonged absence of social services, people remain extremely vulnerable in CAR. Years of conflict have threatened the already fragile national economy and subsequently the population’s access to basic services. Large parts of the population are left with limited access to adequate nutritious food, safe drinking water, or adequate sanitation and health care. Many schools and hospitals across the northern prefectures remain closed and even when open, the quality of services they offer is extremely poor.

With limited access to education and income-generating options, children and youth are left with few alternatives than to resort to risky coping mechanisms such as joining armed groups. Ongoing research suggests that many boys who are economically desperate such as those in child-headed households, orphans, children from poor families, etc form a significant proportion of those who are at risk of recruitment into the armed forces.

While there is general awareness among army officers of the illegality of under-18 recruitment, this has not been translated into an effective community response to prevent recruitment of children. Many children remain in both rebel groups and Government supported local militias. It is estimated that nearly 1,000 children are or have been associated with various armed groups, mainly the APRD operating in northwestern CAR. UNICEF estimates that 20-30% of the self local militias are children. These militias are increasingly involved in direct fighting against armed rebels, posing additional harm and survival risks to children.

Though it is difficult to establish the prevalence rate of sexual violence, there is widespread fear of rape among girls and women. Members of the armed forces are often cited as perpetrators but it appears that rape by civilian and community members is more frequent. The majority of SGBV survivors, particularly women and girls, have no means to access appropriate and comprehensive care. There are big social, economic and cultural barriers to survivors of rape and gender based violence to seek support.

The UN Peacebuilding Fund contributions were used to support these activities. Other funds complemented and supported these activities, including contributions from the Government of Spain, UNICEF French and Swiss NatComs, CIDA-Canada, Consolidated Humanitarian Fund for CAR/CHF-UNDP-USA and UNICEF Global Thematic funds. These generous fundings have allowed UNICEF CAR to continue to offer preventive and protective response to some of the CAR’s most vulnerable children across the war affected regions.

# II. Resources

# Technical Data on the Donor’s Contribution

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Type of report | Progress and utilisation report  |
| Country | Central African Republic |
| Project title | Prevention of child recruitment and all forms of conflict-related violence, and Providing protection and assistance for the family and community-based reintegration of demobilised children |
| Duration of the project | February 2009 – May 2010 |
| Programme  | YS 704 Child Protection |
| Donor reference  | UNDP/Multi-Donor Trust Fund Peace Building Fund for CAR |
| Donor code  | U99905 |
| PBA number  | SC/2009/0054-00 |
| Total Allocation | USD 1,820,251.32 |
| Spent amount  | USD 1,813,336.28 |
| Balance | USD 6,915.04 |
| Period covered by project report | February - December 2009 |
| Date of report  | 31 March 2010 |

# Funds utilisation

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Programme** | **Description** | **Amount** |
| Protection in emergencies | * Payment of NGO partners
* Reimbursement of expenses of PCA DDR-SGBV-MRM1612
* Protection/DDR and CPIE activities
* Monitoring missions
* Resolution 1612 Methods Workings Group Survey
 | 1,201,289.00 |
| Child Protection –Bossangoa zonal office | * Staff meetings
* Training of Government officials and NGO partners on child rights
* Social mobilisation for birth registration
* OVC in emergencies programme support in Bossangoa
* Seminar on reinsertion programme
* Mid-term programme review
 | 104,725.23 |
| Child Protection -Kaga Bandoro zonal office | * Sensitisation campaign
* Monitoring and evaluation
* Monitoring missions
* Interagency missions
 | 31,841.31 |
| Child Protection - Programme support | * Programme support
 | 229,637.12 |
| HIV/AIDS & Children - Risk reduction of vulnerable youth | * Workshop
* Evaluations
* National Review of the HIV programme in adolescents in conflict situations in CAR
 | 6,643.00 |
| Advocacy for Policies & Partnership for the rights of Children | * C4D missions
* Reporting
* Production of materials on human rights violations
* Missions
 | 49,088.40 |
| * Support les enfants d’abord foundation
* Journalist workshop
 | 18,314.19 |
| * Mid-Term programme Review
* SITAN
 | 499.46 |
| Research, Monitoring & Evaluation | * KAP study on essential family practices
 | 88,770.66 |
| Cross Sectoral Costs  | * Operational cost
 | 82,527.90 |
| Grand Total of Funds Committed  | 1,813,336.28 |
| Total Funds Still Available  | 6,915.04 |

\* For more detailed financial report, please refer to the utilisation of funds report provided as a separate document.

# III. Implementation and Monitoring Arrangements

## Role of UNICEF and its response to the problem

* ***Advocacy and alliance building***

UNICEF continued to play a major and a leading role in advocating and lobbying the Government and the armed actors to demobilise all children associated with armed groups and to stop further recruitment and use of children. However, despite the commitment of the Government and rebel groups to end this phenomenon a robust advocacy strategy is still needed to address the use of children by the self defence militias.

*Important steps towards OP-CAAC ratification in CAR*: Following a consultative process with national partners including the Government of CAR, NGOs and the parliamentarians, UNICEF advocated for a “legislative plan” establishing the conditions and deadlines for the national process of ratification of the Optional Protocol on Children Affected by Armed Conflict (OP-CAAC). The plan was formally proposed by an inter-ministerial commission to the legislative commission and then approved by the 109 parliamentarians in plenary session of the National Assembly. The two Optional Protocols to the UNCRC are due to be signed during the first legislative period between March and May 2010.

* ***Promoting intersectoral programming***

Child protection is intrinsically an issue that cross-cuts many sectors involving health, access to justice, family support and access to education. In this light, UNICEF is also supporting education, health and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) programmes in northern CAR to increase access of children to basic services. Also, as the lead agency for education and WASH clusters in CAR, UNICEF continued to use these fora to advocate for the increase of the coverage of both programmes in conflict-affected zones.

* ***Enhacing coordination***

At national level, UNICEF continued to attend the UNHCR lead protection cluster and other relevant coordination fora to ensure child protection issues and concerns were adequately prioritised and to inform broader humanitarian agendas and interventions. Also, UNICEF successfully advocated for the establishment of child protection working groups both at national and field level. These fora have been established in Kaga Bandoro and Paoua, and are chaired by UNICEF and increasingly showing a high level of productivity.

* ***Capacity building and standard setting***

In addition to providing funds, UNICEF played an important role in providing technical assistance to partner organisations through coaching, supervision and training. To ensure a consistent and harmonised approach in the reintegration of conflict-affected children and children separated from armed groups and forces, UNICEF led the development of a practical guideline document which details the minimum standards for each phase of child DDR process in CAR. These minimums standards were endorsed by all UNICEF child protection partners and provide a general framework for the release of children associated with armed groups, their transition from military to civil life and reintegration into their communities.

# IV. Results

* ***Separation and reintegration of children associated with armed groups***

During the reporting period, considerable efforts were made in lobbying various armed actors and CAR government to stop the use of children by armed groups and forces. As already stated, UNICEF was able to secure the commitment of APRD to releasing and demobilising all children who are still associated with them.

In early 2009, UNICEF in collaboration with *Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and International Rescue Committee (IRC)* built three transit centres in Boya, Paoua and Bocaranga for temporary care and protection of children separated from armed groups. In Kaga Bandoro, 15 transit families were identified by IRC based on inter-agency agreed criteria and received basic training in children’s rights and their role in providing transit care for children separated from the armed groups. Two transit centres remain operational in 2010.

A total number of **706 children (630 boys and 76 girls) have been demobilised** so far and were either cared for at interim care centres (ICC) or stayed with host families during which time they participated in various activities including catch-up classes and income-generating activities and received psychosocial support. All children received a demobilisation kit comprising of limited NFI for use in the ICC: clothes, sleeping mats, blankets, slippers, toothpaste and toothbrush, and additional hygienic kits for girls. They also received a complete medical screening at the centre. Catch-up classes were organised, and integrated psychosocial services were provided. They have all since been successfully reunified with their families. Out of the 500 children who were reintegrated in their families and communities in 2007-08, during the reporting period other **180 c**hildren released by UFDR were identified and assited by the *International Medical Corps (IMC)* in Vakaga.

During the reporting period, **5,492 (3,828 boys and 1,664 girls) children and young people participated in basic skills training, income generating and livelihood programmes** to equip them with better livelihoods options, ensure their self-sufficiency and therefore prevent further exposure to abuse and exploitation. UNICEF partners continue to provide follow-up support through home visits and individual counselling.

In addition, **423 vulnerable children and youth (252 boys and 171 girls) received life skills training and literacy courses** through non-formal education programmes.

In Haut-Mbomou prefecture, at least **32 children and women** used in hostilities by LRA, released and/or captured during hostilities were assisted. **8 were repatriated** from Congo-DRC and assisted in care centres and further supported for family reunification through the ICRC.

* ***Psychosocial support to war affected children:***

The scope of the DDR programme did not only focus on the children formerly associated with armed groups, but also other vulnerable children in the community including OVCs, IDPs, survivors and victims of GBV/SGBV and children from ethnic minorities.

UNICEF targeted the entire community through the consolidation of community reinsertion programme with an emphasis on a more integrated approach to community care and access to basic services. In this light, nearly **95,797 vulnerable children and young people, including OVCs (62% boys and 38% girls) in the community participated in UNICEF supported psychosocial activities**. Activities within these programmes include peer-support groups for children and youth, football, volleyball and other culturally adapted and structured play activities, and one-to-one or group sensitisation sessions on children’s rights.

To increase the capacity of partners in organising quality, structured and meaningful play activities for vulnerable children, UNICEF provided training to 26 (21 men and 5 women) social workers and staff from the Ministry of Social Affairs and NGO partners.Training modules for Psychosocial Support in Child Friendly Spaces were developed and remain available for further exploitation. **27** child friendly spaces were rehabilitated or constructed and additionally **19** child protection networks were also established in the most critically affected communities.

* ***Prevention and response to Gender based violence***

In partnership with IRC, UNICEF supported the establishment of a referral and post care management system for GBV survivors in 192 villages scattered between Bocaranga, Koui, Ndim and Ngaoudanye, which are some of the most conflict-affected zones in northwestern CAR. **57** community volunteers received basic training on SGBV prevention, response and referral mechanisms.

As a result, **108 self-reported survivors of SGBV received post-incident support and follow-up.**

* ***Monitoring of child rights violations in accordance with the 1612 UNSC resolution***

UNICEF supported the establishment of a monitoring and reporting task force at national level. Procedures for the collection and verification of information on the grave violations of children’s rights by the various armed groups and forces operating in CAR were also developed and the first report to the Security Council was produced.As part of this process, UNICEF provided training to 22 field staff of child protection and UN agencies in the 1612 and 1882/1888 UNSC resolutions, basic child rights information collection mechanisms, including the aspects of confidentiality and ethical data collection. The participants have formed the basis of the information collection network in the field, which will be linked to the humanitarian agencies for protection and delivery of response.

UNICEF in collaboration with UNHCR and BONUCA (now BINUCA) developed a training programme for military personnel, including peacekeeping forces (MICOPAX) on human rights, international humanitarian law, protection of IDPs and child protection. As part of the institutionalisation process of this training, a training of trainers’ workshop for the instructors of the FACA, the Gendarmerie and the Presidential Guards was held in camp Beal for 30 Presidential guards on the protection of civilian population rights.

An additional **1,230 persons (912 armed actors, 318 local authorities) and 350 international peacekeepers received training on child rights**, prevention of under-age recruitment and the protection of children separated from fighting forces as well as sexual abuse and exploitation; including the UN Security Council resolution 1612 & 1882 to increase their compliance to protecting children during armed conflict.

# V. Future Work Plan

* Continue to advocate for the respect of children’s rights and prevent recruitment and abduction of children, specifically taking into account vulnerable children such as minorities, orphans and street children.
* Advocate for the ratification of additional protocols to the CRC and the adoption of the national protection law by the parliament and the Government.
* Scale up GBV prevention and response programming, especially in war affected zones. The expansion of GBV services through the development of GBV coordination and referral mechanisms, including justice has been identified as priority for the remaining of 2010 and 2011.
* Continue to provide funds and technical assistance for care, protection and provision of integrated psychosocial support to war affected children, including support to children associated with armed groups and their families.
* Support to and scaling up of monitoring and reporting mechanisms in line with the Security Council resolution 1612 to cover border areas in the northeast and the Northwest of CAR.

# VI. Performance Indicators

**Implementation constraints**

The security situation which remained very volatile, particularly in border areas of the Northeast and Southeast seriously affected the ability of partners to sustain the project activities in some areas. Humanitarian actors have been increasingly targeted in recent armed attacks that occurred in Haut Mbomou, Ndélé and Vakaga (killing and abduction of international staff, looting of properties etc), which led to a suspension of humanitarian interventions in the areas. ICT equipment, two cars and two motorcycles of the priogramme were stolen during these incidents.

Geographical coverage and the quality of partner’s interventions remain limited due to difficulties faced by UNICEF child protection partners in attracting experienced child protection professionals, especially in GBV and reintegration of war affected children programming. Also, GBV services offered are not comprehensive as they do not address the issue of legal redress/GBV survivors’ access to justice. Expansion of GBV services through the development of GBV coordination and referral mechanisms, including justice has been identified as priority for 2010 and 2011.

Children are returning to poor communities with limited access to basic services and livelihoods options. With the continued insecurity and presence of armed groups in nothern CAR, children are still facing the risk of being recruited/re-recruited in the absence of proper reintegration programmes. This implies increasing our understanding of socioeconomic reintegration options based on a broader market survey and availability of long term funds for reintegration programmes.

## Lessons learned

*Information sharing, dialogue, joint programming and high-level advocacy for an UN consolidated/common plan for child PDDR and for Monitoring and Reporting of Grave human rights violations against children*

Due to lack of funds, among other constraints, child protection field initiatives of PDDR and MRM under 1612 process had to be temporarily suspended during 2008 and in early 2009. However, the field mission of the SRSG-CAAC Coomaraswamy which UNICEF promoted proved to be a triggering factor for a meaningful change of the situation and a re boosting process, as humanitarian dialogues with State and non-State armed entities were renewed and undertaken as well as contacts and meetings with the Government, UN agencies and bodies for Child Protection purposes were assured. As a follow up, a series of meetings, working sessions and presentations were held including within the Protection Cluster, and at HDPT, UNCT, CAR National Human Rights NGO’s and Association Network, Protection mandated INGO’s, ICRC, SRSG CAR and BONUCA SMT, and Comité de Pilotage for Peace Building Fund etc. UNICEF actively sought funds and was successful in receiving USD 2 million from the UN Peacebulding Fund for UNICEF CPiE initiatives, with a focus on CAAFG PDDR and protection of CAAC. Other contributions complemented this fund to ensure the planned protection activities were implemented.

The child PDDR and 1612 MRM initiative in CAR became an opportunity for UNICEF to reshape its advocacy and communication strategy through a combined set of high-level advocacy, a participatory planning and programming process and information sharing. UNICEF was successful in having its PDDR Contingency Plan and the MRM under 1612 initiatives being endorsed by the CAR UNCT. This facilitated the UN agencies and ICRC to become active stakeholders in the PDDR contingency plan and MRM process, independently of previous existence of MoU. For instance, ICRC provides family and reunification assistance; WFP provides food ration to the transit interim care centres, and UNFPA provides condoms and other kits for distribution to demoblised CAAFGs after HIV&AIDS sensitisation sessions; or FAO being involved in accompanying ex CAAFGs in agro-pastoralist reintegration life projects, etc.

The national contingency plan for PDDR was designed and is under implementation, the first UNSG Report to the UN Security Council on the situation of CAAC in CAR was issued on Feb 2009, and the CAR UNCT Task Force under 1612 SC resolution is established and operational. For MRM under 1612 UNSC resolution, the UNCT Working Group and its taskforce were established with wide participation of the agencies such as SRSG-CAR/BINUCA, OCHA, UNHCR, WFP, UNDP-BCPR, UNFPA, UNIFEM, UNESCO and UNICEF.

*The increase in the number and the strengthening of effectiveness of UNICEF implementing partners, especially INGOs on the field made it possible for UNICEF to reach more children.*

*The cluster approach adopted in CAR provides an opportunity for productive exchange and information sharing for all protection partners.*

## Gender considerations

In the conflict-affected northeastern and northwestern prefectures of CAR, the trauma of conflict and displacement has caused a collapse of traditional or community mechanisms to protect vulnerable groups, which is exercerbated by near absence of any state structures to care for conflict-affected individuals. Orphans, abandoned children and other vulnerable children who seek support from community members are often socially marginalised.

Without state presence or community-based structures in place to look after the protection and well-being of vulnerable children, these children, and specially girls, are at risk of further abuse and exploitation such as recruitment/use by armed forces, forced labour, sexual exploitation, and forced marriage. Due to the extreme poverty, even children who live with their families are at risk of abuse and neglect, espcially girls. Girls are often forced into early marriages because of the traditional dowry system whereby the groom pays the bride’s family in exchange for permission to marry their daughter. Child labour and lack of education, particularly among girls, are widespread as parents cannot afford to send all their children to school. In addition, female genital mutilation is an accepted cultural tradition that affects the majority of girls. Access to both medical and psychosocial care is extremely difficult for a majority of GBV survivors, who, as a result, are more likely to suffer from both the harmful physical effects of GBV and the long-lasting psychological impact, affecting their sense of self-worth and acceptance within their families and communities.

In Nana Gribizi and Ouham Pende, children associated with armed forces and groups are undergoing demobilisation, including 52 girls who were assisted by foster families during the first phase of their release, prior to family reunification and community reintegration. All of them had been sexually abused and/or exploited by armed actors. While some armed groups have agreed to stop recruiting children, poverty and food insecurity upon return to their communities may constitute a push factor for reenlistment. Some girls have left their communities to find work in Cameroon or Bangui, where they face additional protection risks such as abuse, labor exploitation or forced prostitution. There are also cases of sexual violence against children and women and data indicates that 20% of the cases reported were perpetrated by armed actors.

Promoting the rehabilitation and reintegration for children and women survivors of SGBV is the key component of the programme. Women and child victims of SGBV continue to be identified and referred to available health and psychosocial services, while counseling spaces remain functional, there is respect of confidentiality and there is a designated area for children. Preparations are underway to establish a centre for vulnerable children in the Kaga Bandoro area in order to improve child SGBV survivors’ access to medical and psychosocial services. In view of promoting the reintegration of women and children SGBV survivors, 8 community groups that build the basic capacities of women are being supported in Nana Gribizi, 4 of which are in the process of becoming autonomous. Community awareness-raising activities also contribute to the fight against SGBV.

Furthermore, in coordination with the Education programme, we support the parent teacher associations to conduct larger community awareness campaigns about the importance of girls’ education. Issues concerning sexual abuse and exploitation will be addressed by offering training to teachers and key education officials on SGBV principles and gender equality, while promoting youth-led awareness raising activities. This is expected to increase the girls’ retention rate in schools and prevent violence in schools. By ensuring that 50% of peer educators are girls, these girls will be able to act as positive role models for younger girls in their communities.