



## GPC support mission to Central African Republic

16/07/2013

### I. Introduction

1. From 3 to 16<sup>th</sup> July 2013, Roving Procap SPO conducted a follow-up GPC support mission to Central African Republic. In the course of his mission Roving SPO conducted consultations with Protection Cluster Coordination team and partners to identify the response given, the gaps and challenges faced by the Protection Cluster since the his last visit in February 2013. In the meanwhile of the GPC support mission, a visit from the Under Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator jointly with the European Commissioner for Humanitarian Affairs was conducted.

### II. General context

2. Since the last Roving Procap's mission, the situation in Central African Republic has radically changed, especially with the members of the Séléka coalition that entered the capital city of Bangui and overthrew President François Bozizé on March 24, 2013. The entry of Séléka armed forces in Bangui was accompanied by a general situation of insecurity and violence impacting civilian population and humanitarian agencies. Uncertainty remains due to the absence of an effective state and administration throughout the country. Séléka's coalition is insubstantial as five different groups with different agendas compose it and the new government of national unity is fragile and faces considerable challenges. As example the *General Mussa Dhaffane*, leader of the *CSPK Wakodro*<sup>1</sup> and Minister of Water and Forest in the transitional government was arrested on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2013 following a statement denouncing the lack of inclusiveness by the Séléka leadership. Pre-existing inter-communal tensions exacerbated, especially between Christian and Muslim communities. Securing the country and restoring public services including judicial, economic and social system is a real challenges and not expected in the coming months according to experts. Dissension within Séléka, the proliferation of weapons and the deterioration of the social environment could jeopardise the very fragile transition. Despite the launch of a disarmament campaign conducted under the umbrella of the FOMAC (Force multinationale d'Afrique Centrale), security situation has not yet improved in the country including in the capital city of Bangui. The humanitarian situation has also deteriorated, with the population suffering from deprivation, permanent abuses and lack of access to essential services. The incoming rainy season and the limited resources of humanitarian actors currently aggravate this situation.

### III. Protection situation

3. Since 24<sup>th</sup> March 2013, Protection of civilian situation has increasingly become a major concern in Central African Republic, in particular in remote rural areas and urban environments witnessing a large presence of Séléka combatants, including in the capital city of Bangui. This new context has worsened an already very weak humanitarian and protection situation characterized by both targeted and indiscriminate violations and abuses against civilians, gender based violence and exploitation against women and children, violation of child rights, property damages, lootings and disruption of livelihoods. The total lack of law and order affects women, children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. Acts of reprisals that include summary executions, arbitrary arrests more often accompanied by tortures target individuals associated with the former regime and communities with specific political or religious beliefs. Protection Cluster has received reports on large-scale violations and abuses against civilian population when Séléka combatants progressed toward the capital city and since the movement took the control of Bangui. These include widespread lootings, killings, Gender Based Violence's, arbitrary arrests and tortures. Nowadays, Protection incidents are still reported to monitors on a daily basis throughout the country and in Bangui.

### Impact on local governance and law enforcement

4. Since the eruption of the crisis in December 2012, civilian authorities and law enforcement agents fled

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<sup>1</sup> CPSK: Convention patriotique du salut du kodro (Kodro or country in Songo).



from the areas that fall under the controlled of Séléka elements fearing acts of retaliation or facing direct violence. This situation resulted in the collapse of public administration and law enforcement infrastructures as well as capacities to protect, increased criminal activities and proliferation of abuses against civilians. Public infrastructures and archives have been mostly destroyed or looted outside of Bangui.

### **Internally Displaced Persons**

5. It is difficult to determine the exact number of internally displaced persons but an assumption was established and identified 200,000 peoples displaced to the surrounding forests or fields through evaluations conducted by the Protection Cluster. Some displaced persons who tried to return home were allegedly shot to death or physically abused by Séléka fighters and their civilian proxies. In addition, forced displacement are still reported especially in the northern part of the country where Séléka in association with cross border pastoral groups such as the Mbarara attacked civilian populations, executed or abused inhabitants as well as looted and burnt down villages.

### **Child Protection**

6. Child Protection remains challenging in CAR with close to 3,500 children allegedly recruited into armed forces including the Séléka coalition since December 2012, access to and the release and reintegration of girls and boys lack commitment from Séléka leadership and the newly established government. Disappearances and abductions have also been reported and include children and women. Reports were received with regards to the increases of early and forced marriages of young girls allegedly committed by Séléka combatants and civilian individuals. Some infrastructures essential for children still remain occupy by Séléka combatants. Children access to essential services for their survival (e.g. nutrition, education, etc.) remains difficult or impossible due to displacement, general insecurity and disruption of public infrastructures and limited humanitarian capacities.

### **Gender Based violence**

7. Population interviewed by protection actors reported the exacerbation of pre-existing gender vulnerability since the eruption of the crisis in December 2012. Access to services essential for GBV survivors is extremely limited. Women and children continue to be victims of sexual and gender-based violence, the response health system (first point entry) is weak and insufficiently engaged, with limited stocks of post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) to prevent HIV, little exits in terms of counselling and psycho-social support to the victims of gender based violations.

### **Inter-communal conflicts and violence**

8. Inter-communal relationship has been historically difficult in Central African Republic, especially between nomadic groups and sedentary farmers in its northern part. Previous to the crisis in 2010 and 2011, protection actor's effort resulted in progress toward harmonising relation between communities. Though, the recent crisis hindered these improvements and community conflict mitigation's capacities were seriously undamaged, in particular in areas bordering Chad and Sudan. In addition, tension between religious confessions has been exacerbated in the past months due to the ethnical and religious composition of Séléka and resulting in direct violence against civilian population or religious symbols. The lack of formal system of property law and the mismanagement of resources leave the space for arbitrary measures by the Séléka, their local commanders providing armed support to Mbarara, nomadic pastoralists to move their cattle from neighbouring countries to Central African Republic where they occupy farmer's lands.

### **Humanitarian access and safety of Humanitarian personnel**

9. Safety of humanitarian workers and infrastructures as well as population access to humanitarian and protection assistance is a major concern in Central African Republic. In addition to the lootings that affected relief agencies and items since December 2012 and in particular after March 24<sup>th</sup> 2013 in Bangui, Humanitarian and protection actors are still facing regular threats from armed elements, including Séléka combatants. When Séléka took the control over the territory and in Bangui, some humanitarian employees had their life threaten by armed combatants and report on lootings and car



jacking of relief agencies were reported on a large scale. The lack of security guarantees by the newly established Government, the operational and financial loss for humanitarians prevent most of relief agencies to redeploy or open field offices as well as conduct their daily activities.

#### **IV. Protection response and coordination**

##### **Coordination capacity**

10. Protection Cluster coordination has improved since the last GPC support mission. Protection Cluster coordination resources were deployed through the appointment of a dedicated INGO co-lead by the Danish Refugee Council in June 2013 funded by ECHO and a Senior Protection Cluster Coordinator by UNHCR in July 2013. Thematic working group were also reinforced by the implementation of co-leadership agreements between lead agencies and INGOs. CPWG is co-led by UNICEF and COOPI INGO, GBV working group with UNICEF and Mercy Corps INGO. The coordination is currently strengthening its capacity through the implementation of a Strategic Advisory Group.
11. Challenges remain important in term of the structure and cluster functioning. Minimum criteria for participation within the Cluster as developed by the IASC have not been implemented and the presence of non-protection technically expert agencies often diverts the Protection Cluster from its core strategic activities. Protection Cluster and its working groups initiated a reform of its terms of references in order to integrate to improve the response.

##### **Information management**

12. Improvement in the information management system has also been made since the last visit of the Roving Procap. Protection monitoring, GBV IMS and Child Protection MRM activities were activated in six of the twelve's prefectures<sup>2</sup> of the country. A dedicated Protection Cluster information manager is under recruitment by the Danish Refugee Council and is expected to deploy early September for a four months period.

##### **Protection mainstreaming**

13. Despite advocacy actions made by the Cluster, protection dimension remains under addressed by the Humanitarian Country Team at strategic level and by the Inter-Cluster at operational level. General protection projects integrate a protection-mainstreaming component into their response with a focus on Protection Cluster members, local authorities and communities. However, gaps remain at the level of inter-cluster response and Humanitarian country team strategy planning.

##### **Child Protection**

14. Child Protection Working Group is monitoring violations of child rights violations and abuses committed by parties to the conflict and leading advocacy efforts with the transitional authorities in this regard. Between May and June 2013 CPWG oversaw the release of 149 children, including 15 girls associated with Séléka armed forces and their integration into a transitional support program.

##### **Gender Based Violence**

15. Gender Based Violence Working Group is resuming its response throughout the country. Agencies already responding on this issue before the December crisis resumed partially their activities especially in aspect of information collection and referral of GBV survivors to appropriate structures and providing psychosocial support through specific infrastructure and mobile teams. Since January 2013, in Bangui and six accessible prefectures, 1408 victims of sexual and gender-based violence (of which 50% were children) were assisted with psychosocial and medical support.

##### **House, land and property**

16. Despite identified urgent needs, there is no HLP working group in CAR. There has been discussion around activating HLP WG with the option of integrating emergency shelter coordination for conflict affected IDPs into this thematic group. There are limited actors involve in the field of shelter assistance in country (two INGOs and UNHCR) with limited human resources capacities.

#### **V. Gaps and challenges**

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<sup>2</sup> Prefecture: Geographical administrative entities.



Security constraints remain important, as the situation is extremely volatile and unpredictable affecting the provision of humanitarian assistance and protection response. Protection Cluster identified challenges and constraints to be:

- The difficulty to negotiate access or raise protection concern with Séléka field commanders and Government officials;
- The impunity of Séléka elements and lack of commitment or capacity to protect by the new Government;
- Lack of presence and disruption of civilian authorities and administration throughout the country;
- The limited access by protection actors to the affected population especially those displaced in remote areas;
- General lack of funding for protection sector (to date 17.6% of requested funding through the CAP);
- Protection mainstreaming: Despite effort made by the Protection Cluster, the inter-cluster and Humanitarian Country Team failed in mainstreaming protection within the overall humanitarian response;
- Inter-communal relation has been hampered since the eruption of the crisis resulting in high scale civilian violence, especially in remote area.
- The level of coordination between the Protection Cluster and the UN Integrated Office (Bureau Intégré des Nations Unies en Centrafrique – BINUCA) is not sufficient. Protection of Civilian is still not on the mission agenda.
- Specific response to IDPs is not effective yet in the country. Most of displaced population has not been accessed and their needs addressed.
- Protection Cluster in Central African Republic lacks technical capacity in the field of HLP, especially its aspects related to access to land and property law and inter-communal conflict mitigation. Shelter assistance to IDPs is not effective or funded despite increased needs following the destruction of civilian accommodations. This situation constitutes an obstacle for population return.
- GBV Working Group faces response constraints with unclear or limited stocks of post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) to prevent HIV, low capacity in terms of counselling and psycho-social support to the victims of both grave violations with only six prefecture for 16 cover by GBV services.