



Critical Protection Concerns: Situation in Bangui Central African Republic

There are an estimated 213,760 internally displaced persons (IDPs) currently living in some 34 spontaneous IDP sites in Bangui, the capital of Central African Republic (CAR), and over 650,000 displaced across the country. While the hope is that the IDPs will return home once security sufficiently improves, it is more probable that the population will remain in displacement for even longer. In such an event, it is essential for the humanitarian community to ensure that people are living in safety, with their basic needs addressed and their human dignity and rights respected. Current conditions in most of the sites in Bangui are appalling with an insufficient number of latrines, water points, washing facilities, shelter, food, and health care. For example, the airport of Bangui, currently hosting around 33,000 IDPs, has no latrines at all; defecation in the surrounding fields or trenches is both unhygienic and de-humanizing and the Church of St. Joseph Mukassa in Bangui has only one water point for 12,000 people.

International organizations continue the distribution of food, tents, tarpaulins, sleeping mats, mosquito nets and cooking sets. However, the needs are enormous and the resources at the disposal of the international community inadequate. The declaration of the situation in Central African Republic a Level 3 emergency requires the reinforcement of the response of the humanitarian community and the sense of urgency must be brought to the process of humanitarian relief.

The Protection cluster in CAR along with its Child Protection Sub-cluster and GBV Sub-cluster would like to draw your attention to the following immediate protection concerns:

Inter-Communal Tension

The security situation in the country continues to be very volatile with the inter-communal tension increasingly resulting in violence and threats. The IDP sites are often occupied by population of only one confession or are situated in religious establishments making them an easy target of the inter-sectorial violence. The fear and insecurity that the population continues to experience hinder a resumption of economic and social activities known to contribute to resilience and rebuilding links between the communities. The protection response should take these dynamics into account, for instance by supporting reconciliation efforts underway by the communities, the resumption of economic life, and physical protection informed by community concerns in addition to individual needs.

Child Protection

The child protection needs are growing as a result of the continuous displacement of families in Bangui and lack of basic services in the various IDP sites. Children are suffering from dangers and injuries due to the deplorable living conditions and insecurity. Many children and their families are showing signs of psychosocial distress. It is estimated that 3,500 children have been recruited into armed forces or groups since the coup d'état. The exact numbers of separated and unaccompanied children within Bangui and the rest of the country still need to be verified as the proper registration and identification efforts are currently undergoing in IDP sites in Bangui and Bossangoa. Other child

protection activities include training, prevention of separation through key messages and setting up of child friendly spaces and spaces for listening to adults and training of staff and volunteers. Trained staff and volunteers are scarce and child protection actors and partners of the Protection Cluster are invited to consider setting up and strengthening child protection programming in CAR.

Gender-based Violence

Gender-based Violence (GBV) has long been pervasive in CAR. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable and are routinely targeted and face sexual violence in their homes, communities, and particularly in IDP sites. In this context more than ever, women and girls are extremely vulnerable to rape, abduction, torture, and other forms of GBV. Most GBV survivors are unable to access essential medical care, psychosocial support, and other vital services, or are reluctant to do so given the stigma and culture of silence pervasive in the country. Survivors face a lack of socio-economic support, continued trauma, serious health risks, and lifelong complications. Measures must be taken to promote the protection of women and children when assistance is being distributed, in the provision of goods and services, and in providing gender-sensitive facilities (e.g. separate toilet and washing facilities for men and women). Everyone is responsible for responding to cases of sexual violence. Humanitarian assistance should be given without pre-conditions: no one should have to offer sex to access aid. Data surrounding sexual violence is highly sensitive and should only be handled by qualified protection professionals.

Protection Cluster response is informed by a protection cluster strategy, developed in a consultative process with affected persons, their communities, and in particular with displaced persons, cluster participating agencies and participants from other clusters.

The Protection Cluster in the Central African Republic is led by UNHCR and Co-facilitated by DRC. The sub-cluster on Child Protection is led by UNICEF along with COOPI and Save the Children and the Sub-Cluster on GBV is led by UNICEF.