

Central African Republic

Part 1: Situation update in the country

In 2018, the National Plan for Recovery and Peacebuilding in the Central African Republic (RCPCA) was in its first year of implementation. The development of the National Plan had accompanied an optimism regarding the country's stabilization; but in 2017 it was shadowed by a deterioration of the security situation. The African Union and the Economic Commission of Central African States, supported by the international community, are leading an African initiative to create the conditions for peace through a dialogue between the Government and 14 armed groups. The initiative encompasses past efforts by the European Union, Saint Egidio and regional actors, and is recognized as the main framework for the peace process in the Central African Republic.

The process took time to bear fruit, particularly because it lacked required resources as reflected in the United Nations Secretary's 2018 report. Beyond the challenges of its peacebuilding efforts, Central African Republic is bogged down in a cycle of violence, which in 2018 continued to spread. According to the 2019 Humanitarian Response Plan, one of four people is displaced and 2.9 million people (63 per cent of the population) need humanitarian assistance and protection.

According to the International Monetary Fund, there was a timid resumption of economic growth in 2018, but the country struggles to regain the economic level of production it had before the 2013 crisis. The overall security situation remains unstable, and public finances suffer from the low dynamic of economic activity and low recovery of tax revenues. The mobilization of tax revenues has increased since 2014, but the state has not recovered its pre-crisis (2013) tax rate, which in 2012 was already relatively low at 9.9 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (compared to 4.9 per cent of GDP in 2014 and 8.8 per cent in 2017).

The situation is due to factors such as the deterioration of the security environment; bottlenecks in transport caused by poor road infrastructure; the challenges of a landlocked country; and a low performance of investment projects. The 4.5 per cent inflation rate is above the 3 per cent standard of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community. The country is dependent on financial support from the international community to finance sovereign services.

According to Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, official development

assistance (ODA) to Central African Republic rose from US\$269.1 million (or 13.5 per cent of GDP) in 2010 to US\$515.3 million (26 per cent of GDP) in 2017. The bulk of investment expenditure, 80 per cent in 2017, is financed by external support. In the RCPCA, the Government reflected the intention to reduce dependence with reforms to stimulate economic recovery and raise the amount of tax revenue to pre-crisis levels. However, it was not reflected in the budget adopted in 2018.

The Central African Republic Government faces major budget deficits. In 2018, resource allocation to, and spending in, social sectors such as health and education were cut. The health sector budget decreased by 26 per cent and education by 46 per cent between 2017 and 2018. Current expenditures are mainly devoted to operational costs of the central administration. There are limited resources devoted to investment in social sectors or outside the capital, Bangui. In 2018, only 31 per cent of the budget was allocated to education, health, youth employment, agriculture and the redeployment of the administration throughout the country. As a result, children and other vulnerable populations are denied access to quality social services, exacerbating the unequal access to basic services, which is a root cause of the conflict.

The situation of children in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals

SDG 1. No poverty

The Central African Republic is ranked 188th of 189 countries on the United Nations Human Development Index. Extreme poverty is alarming countrywide. In 2017, an estimated 62 per cent of the population lived below the poverty line (US\$1.25 per day). The World Bank will conduct a Living Standard Measurement Survey in 2019 which will update the 2008 data on household poverty from a monetary perspective.

SDG 2: Zero hunger

According to a 2018 SMART study, the national average of severe acute malnutrition is 2.1 per cent. The prevalence of global acute malnutrition is 7.1 per cent; two prefectures (Basse-Kotto and Vakaga) have a prevalence above 10 per cent. In 16 of the 18 internally displaced persons sites, the prevalence rate of global acute malnutrition is above the emergency threshold according to 2017-2018 SMART surveys. Preliminary SMART data has linked the acute malnutrition rates to the lack of access to basic water and sanitation services, and other essential family practices. In total, 1.9 million people (40 per cent of the population) experience food insecurity.

SDG 3: Good health and well-being

The Central African Republic has the second-highest newborn death rate in the world: one in 24 newborns do not survive the first 28 days. It has the second-highest maternal mortality ratio, at 882 out of 100,000 live births. A mother has a one in 27 chance of dying due to complications related to pregnancy and childbirth.

In 2018, the Central African Republic was at substantial risk of Ebola Virus Disease and faced other epidemics including monkey pox, measles, yellow fever and meningitis. Insecurity jeopardized the implementation of the polio campaign in Kabo, Batangafo and Ngaoundaye districts. In 2018, the immunization coverage for the third dose of pentavalent vaccine increased from 54 per cent (85,170 children) to 70 per cent (93,610 children).

SDG 4: Quality education

There was an increase in primary education enrolment rate over the previous two school years. According to the Education Statistics Yearbook 2017-2018, a total of 1,107,974 children (485,002 girls and 622,974 boys) were enrolled compared to 1,028,389 children (443,791 girls and 585,048 boys) in the previous school year. The net enrolment rate rose in the same period from 94 per cent to 95 per cent (98 per cent for girls; 100 per cent for boys). The completion rate was only 50 per cent (42 per cent for girls and 59 per cent boys), however, and repetition rates were up to 18 per cent.

In 2017-2018, 143,479 vulnerable children (such as children infected/affected by HIV, children with disabilities and very poor children) were identified, which is 17 per cent of the primary education population. The rate of enrolment for pre-primary school is not available. However, there was a 25 per cent increase over the last two school years. In 2017-2018, the pre-primary level accounted for 34,174 children (27,235 children in 2016-2017) with a gender parity index of 1,0. The official student:teacher ratio was reported at 93:1 in 2017-2018 (90:1 in 2016-2017), but it was systematically observed that classrooms were more crowded and the student:teacher ratio was closer to 120:1 to 200:1. Nearly 60 per cent of the teachers are community teachers who are not formally trained. The 40 per cent who are qualified teachers are mainly based in Bangui, exacerbating the inequity in access to quality learning conditions.

SDG 5: Gender equality

In 2017, the Central African Republic ranked 156/159 on the Gender Inequality Index. The Ibrahim Index of African Governance scored the country's gender equality at 37.4 of 100. Women and girls are generally engaged in low-security jobs in the informal sector. In agriculture, livestock, fisheries and food security, women and girls carry out most of the activities but with the lack of modern tools, and limited access to inputs and credit, there is a low return and insufficient income to address food insecurity and malnutrition. Women's access to land is limited due to limited financial resources and traditional practices that disadvantage women. Sexual and gender-based violence is believed to be under-reported.

The Central African Republic's national law sets a minimum quota of 35 percent of women in parliament during the transition until 2026, and 50 percent thereafter. The RCPGA identifies gender equality as a cross-cutting objective in all three of its pillars, and the Government established a national observatory for gender equality to track progress on the commitments, but it remains underfunded.

The Central African Republic is ranked second in the world for prevalence of child marriage. The legal minimum age for civil marriage is 18 years old, but marriage at 13 years is permitted

if approved by a court or if the girl is pregnant. Marriage at an earlier age than 18 years is also legal with the consent of parents. In 2017, 29 per cent of girls were married by 15 and 68 per cent by the age of 18.

Disparities prevail in access to basic social services, which in most cases are gender blind: there is no systematized gender-perspective in WASH infrastructures or in health and education sectors. At the moment, women represent only 20 per cent of teaching staff, depriving young girls from role models. Gender ratios are 0.8 and 0.67 in primary and secondary education respectively, with regional disparities.

SDG 6: Clean water and sanitation

Of the 2.9 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, 1.9 million need WASH services. According to government statistics, almost half of the population does not have access to clean water; three quarters lack access to basic sanitation; 54 per cent of the households use a drinking water source; and 34 per cent practice open defecation. Due to insecurity, limited access hinders humanitarian WASH assistance. The delay and difficulty to deliver WASH assistance is caused by poor road conditions which, coupled with poor hygiene practices, help spread epidemics.

In 2018, flooding in Bangui's localities and neighbourhoods led to the destruction of homes and latrines and the contamination of water points. The UNICEF global database reported that 22 per cent of the population practice open defecation; and 29 per cent of the population use unimproved drinking services.

SDG 10: Reduced inequalities

The most recent, nationally-representative household survey was conducted in 2008, when the poverty rate was an estimated 50 per cent in urban areas; 69 per cent in rural areas; and 66 per cent nationwide. Estimates based on recent GDP trends suggest that the national poverty rate exceeded 75 per cent in 2017. The persistent insecurity is arguably the main obstacle to poverty reduction, and cause of rising inequalities across the country. Each new violent clash between armed groups causes displacement while worsening household living conditions and destroying private property.

The insecurity has eroded the state's capacity to provide services that were already unequally distributed. To date, no data is available for equity analysis of public spending, partly due to insufficient fiscal decentralization and public-finance information management systems. This situation prevents evidence-based public investment in social sectors. The Central African Republic had a Gini coefficient of 44.8 in 2017, making it the fifth most unequal country in the world. According to the World Happiness Report 2017, the country's people are the most unhappy in the world (of the 155 ranked).

SDG16: Peace, justice and strong institutions

In 2018, many violations of children's rights were recorded, including 48 incidents which led to the recruitment of 76 children into armed groups; 59 cases of sexual violence; 89 attacks on

schools and hospitals; 38 killings and 31 maiming.

Women and children continue to pay a heavy price for this violence. From January to August 2018, 5,733 cases of gender-based violence were recorded in the Gender-Based Violence Information Management System, including 21 per cent cases of sexual violence. In the more stable areas of the country, perpetrators of sexual and physical violence are often in the child victim's community (neighbours, extended family members, motorcycle taxi drivers and school teachers). In conflict-affected areas, the majority of sexual and physical violence are committed by armed groups. In addition, eight per cent of all cases of violence against children registered by UNICEF partners in 2018 were related to accusations of witchcraft. In 2018, as a result of forced population displacement, a growing number of unaccompanied and separated children (704) were identified.

The ongoing humanitarian situation, and the implications for children and UNICEF's operations

The situation in the Central African Republic is the third largest humanitarian crisis in the world, after Yemen and Syria, in terms of the proportion of population in need of humanitarian assistance. According to the 2019 Humanitarian Needs Overview, 2.9 million people (more than half of whom are children) need of humanitarian and protection assistance, an increase of 16 per cent over 2018, and 1.6 million people have acute or immediate humanitarian needs.

Despite a lull in some localities which facilitated the return of more than 230,000 people to their place of origin, forced and continuous displacement took place in several regions of the country throughout 2018. In September 2018, there were over 643,400 internally displaced persons in CAR. The number of Central African refugees increased from 542,896 in 2017 to 573,242 in 2018. Two-thirds of the internally displaced persons are in host families and one-third reside in 77 internal displacement sites.

The root causes of violence are political and economic, resulting in ethnic, religious and inter-community tensions exploited for political purposes. Some armed groups have reached a level of organization and access to resources to acquire weapons and strengthen or increase their territory. Since 2015, the numbers of armed groups have risen, mainly through fragmentation. They operate in over half the country and organize parallel administration systems; in some areas, armed groups have replaced the state services.

The transhumance (movement of cattle during the dry season) is also a destabilizing factor in the North-West (Bouar-Bocaranga-Baboua), West (Berberati, Gamboula, Amada-Gaza), Centre-West (Bossembéle-Yaloké region), Centre-East (Kouango-Bambari-Alindao-Kembé region), North of the Ouham prefecture and in the Nana-Gribizi prefecture. During the transhumance, there is an increase in crime and violence.

The destruction of infrastructure, clashes between armed groups, attacks against the civilian population and incidents against humanitarian actors have affected humanitarian access and

operations. In 2018, six humanitarian workers were killed, and 21 others were injured. Between January and October 2018, 20 organizations had to temporarily withdraw from their intervention areas, depriving the population of vital assistance. Hostilities have spread to new areas, some of which are extremely difficult to access for security and logistical reasons (e.g. villages far from major urban centres or without road access), making assessment missions and humanitarian response difficult.

Chronic underfunding affected the ability of humanitarian actors to respond to the ever-increasing needs. As of November 10, 2018, US\$222 million had been mobilized for the 2018 humanitarian response plans which is only 43 per cent of the target.

Part 2: Major Results including in humanitarian action and gender, against the results in the Country Programme Documents

Alongside the expected results of the country programme and part of the regional drive for transformative change for children's rights in West and Central Africa, UNICEF CAR elected to prioritize immunization (key result for children 1) and the protection of children from violence (key result for children 5). In addition, two priorities related the country context were retained: addressing severe acute malnutrition and providing quality education in emergency contexts.

Goal area 1: Every child survives and thrives

During the reporting period, the Central African Republic made considerable progress in performance of the national immunization programme. Coverage for the third dose of Pentavalent vaccine increased from 54 per cent (85,170 children) in 2017 to 73 per cent (97,214 children) in 2018, and measles coverage increased from 49 per cent to 71 per cent. It was the first time in a decade that CAR reached a coverage far above 50 per cent. The implementation of targeted strategies, and UNICEF and its partner support, resulted in this considerable progress. If efforts are sustained, the Central African Republic will be on track to reach the country programme document and regional key result for children#1 target of 80 per cent by 2021.

In 2018, UNICEF CAR supported the Ministry of Health to strengthen the health workforce with recruitment and deployment of 94 additional staff at central and operational levels. To support the distribution of vaccines and immunization supplies, outreach activities and supervision, UNICEF provided two trucks, six vehicles, 100 motorbikes and 100 bicycles. Under the leadership of the Minister of Health, an urban immunization strategy was implemented in Bangui, where 20 per cent of the population live. To improve the timeliness and completeness of immunization data, a digitalized collection tool (MAGPI) was introduced in partnership with the International Federation of Red Cross.

Specific multi-antigens immunization activities were organized for hard-to-reach, vulnerable,

crisis-affected populations (internally displaced persons, nomads, pygmies), and 33,748 children aged six to 59 months were vaccinated against measles. In response to the polio outbreak in the Lake Chad Basin, three synchronized sub-national immunization activities were conducted in three priority health regions bordering Cameroon and Chad reaching around 600,000 children under five years old during each round.

UNICEF CAR continued its support to develop the cold-chain equipment optimization plan funded by GAVI, which will avail the expanded programme of immunisation more than 300 solar-powered, cold chain equipment in 2019.

The development of a multi-sector nutrition strategic plan was postponed to 2019 due to the weakness of nutritional data. Hence, UNICEF CAR in collaboration with the World Food Programme and members of the humanitarian nutrition cluster supported the completion of a national nutrition survey (SMART). A decree that established a national, multi-sector committee for food security and nutrition was signed by the prime minister, and the Marketing Code of Breastmilk Substitutes was validated.

A total of 250,831 children aged six to 59 months were screened for acute malnutrition (during passive screening and screening campaigns) and referred for treatment when needed. In total, 32,232 (86 per cent) of the 37,281 targeted children under five (out of the caseload of 42,225) suffering from severe acute malnutrition were treated, compared to 77 per cent in 2017 (out of a caseload of 30,521). The performance against standards was good: an 89.9 per cent cure rate (over 75 per cent); a death rate of 1.9 per cent (less than 5 per cent); and a defaulter rate of 6.8 per cent (less than 15 per cent). With UNICEF's support, geographic coverage of nutrition services increased by 33.5 per cent, from 409 therapeutic units in 2017 to 546 in 2018, including 46 intensive therapeutic food units, through mobile and fixed strategies that deliver nutrition services to hard-to-reach populations in insecure and remote areas. Two rounds of Vitamin A supplementation and deworming were organized in 21 out of 35 health districts with 35.4 per cent of coverage (291,157 children aged six to 59 months out of 821,496, nationwide).

UNICEF CAR supported a community-approach pilot that offers an integrated package of community health and nutrition services in 17 health areas in Bangui (nine) and the district of Dekoa (eight). Training and equipment for community management of childhood diseases and detection of malnutrition were provided to 17 community focal points in health centres and 162 community health workers; 4,050 children aged six to 23 months and 8,100 caregivers benefited.

To ensure parents and families in targeted areas have the knowledge and skills to adopt behaviours of good nutrition for children and women who are pregnant, 974 community health workers and 704 health workers were trained to promote infant, youth and child feeding, and other family practices. A total of 55,000 women who were pregnant or lactating women received infant youth and child feeding counselling, of which 29,222 were reached through 546 health centres and 25,778 in communities and internally displaced persons sites.

Despite efforts for the management of severe acute malnutrition, the coverage of children in the Central African Republic is low. The management of moderate acute malnutrition is almost non-existent, thus possibly magnifying the cohort of children with severe acute malnutrition. The lack of a robust system of nutritional surveillance and early warning at the national level to help identify the onset of nutritional crises in real time is a challenge. A nutrition surveillance and early warning system will be designed and implemented in 2019. The UNICEF CAR capacity to provide ready-to-use therapeutic food to manage severe and moderate acute malnutrition, using a simplified protocol in complex and humanitarian settings, is expected to increase the number of children reached. The emergency nutrition response will be coupled with a stronger approach to prevent high levels of stunting (30 per cent).

In 2018, prevention of mother-to-child transmission service coverage was 72 per cent (258/354 facilities), including 69 new sites. The capacity of 154 medical staff was strengthened through on-site coaching leading to quality service delivery. As a result, 2,878 women who were HIV positive and pregnant or lactating (56 per cent of the target); 1,068 children born of mothers who were HIV-positive (58 per cent of the target); and 2,752 children who were living with HIV (28 per cent of the target) had access to anti-retrovirals.

To accelerate the identification of children who were living with HIV, HIV family testing campaigns were organized in four cities with high HIV-prevalence (Paoua, Bambari, Carnot and Berberati). A total of 10,230 families of people living with HIV were reached, of which 6,776 children were tested and 83 detected positive (1.2 per cent) and put on anti-retrovirals. A total of 24,649 adolescents and youth (14,683 female) were tested for HIV, out of whom 636 detected positive and put on anti-retrovirals. UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health to develop policy, planning and normative documents, including: the HIV Operational Plan 2018-2019; the HIV Prevention Plan; a review of anti-retroviral guidelines; and an integrated maternal, newborn and child health /prevention of mother-to-child transmission/paediatric-HIV training module.

UNICEF CAR contributed to the activation of the national Ebola Contingency Plan in response to the May and August Democratic Republic of the Congo Ebola outbreaks, taking the lead on awareness-raising activities. The findings of a knowledge, attitudes and practices study on Ebola informed the Ebola national preparedness plan. UNICEF was instrumental in providing technical and financial assistance to the Ministry of Health in implementing the communication for development component of this plan. The rapid response mechanism was involved in Ebola-preventive WASH activities, setting up hand-washing stations and training officials on hygiene measures at 23 border crossings with the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Goal area 2. Every child learns

UNICEF CAR in collaboration with UNESCO supported the Ministry of Education to strengthen the education system, including its governance, and to develop sectoral documents for evidence-based policy decisions and resource mobilization. CAR produced an Education Sector Analysis (RESEN) and the Education Statistic Yearbook 2017-2018 for the third

consecutive year. The documents were financially supported by UNICEF CAR, together with a roadmap and a modelling and financial simulation, to help Ministry of Education develop a timely and sustainable Education Sector Plan for 2020-2029. With this multi-dimensional support, CAR secured additional multi-year funds including US\$31 million from the Global Partnership for Education and a US\$25 million grant from World Bank.

In May 2018, the Local Education Group reappointed UNICEF as the managing agent for fast-track allocation (20 per cent of the total grant of US\$31 million) approved by the Global Partnership for Education board in September 2018. UNICEF CAR mobilized resources from European Union to respond to the critical needs of the education sector for both humanitarian and recovery interventions. The Government of Germany (KfW) also provided funding for education recovery interventions through UNICEF. As the education cluster lead, UNICEF CAR was instrumental in securing funding from the 'education cannot wait' consortium for education in emergency activities.

To restore the Ministry of Education's presence country-wide, UNICEF CAR supported the efforts to launch the new school year 2018-2019, including an official launch ceremony under the auspices of the Head of State. School material was distributed to 74,014 children (33,602 girls) especially in conflict-affected zones. To support the Government objective to improve school capacity to accommodate an increasing number of children in classrooms and improve the learning environment, UNICEF CAR supported the construction of five schools and rehabilitation of 18 others. However, the project faced delays due to difficult access because of insecurity and limited local construction capacity. School furniture (350 desk-benches) was provided to the Government to favour 1,050 children. Logistical support was provided to the Ministry of Education to distribute of 400 desks along with 165,000 textbooks.

A radio education programme was adopted by the Ministry of Education with UNICEF CAR support. Having the lessons translated to the local language (Sango) better reached out-of-school children, children who are in hard-to-reach areas and children with limited time to learn. A digital library of e-books for teachers continued to expand. Two digital libraries were established in two additional regional pedagogical centres (Bouar and Bossango) to ensure the quality of education and develop capacity for education managers, curriculum designers and trainers-of-trainers.

Through the education in emergencies programme, UNICEF CAR reached 88,769 children, among whom were 39,043 girls (44 per cent), in schools and in temporary learning spaces in 45 internally displaced persons sites and host communities. With access to a learning space, the children also received school kits and benefited from improved skills of the community teachers. UNICEF supported access to learning for 69,719 displaced children (32,155 girls) who attended 296 temporary learning spaces with 798 community teachers (271 of whom were women). The community teachers, though not equipped with qualifications or teacher training, are recruited by the community and 660 of them benefitted from training on basic pedagogical skills and in psychosocial support in nine prefectures (Ouaka, Ouham, Nana- Gribizi, Ouham-

Pende, Mbomou, Haut- Mbomou, Haute Kotto, Basse Kotto and OmbellaMpoko).

Goal area 3. Every child is protected from violence and exploitation

UNICEF Central African Republic prioritized child protection from violence, including in a humanitarian context (key result for children #5), to focus on with the UNICEF Regional Office and regional management team support. The monitoring and reporting mechanism in CAR on grave violations against children was strengthened in coordination with MINUSCA and other United Nations agencies and led to intensive advocacy for the protection of children, particularly for the release of children from armed groups.

In 2018, UNICEF CAR in partnership with national and international non-government organizations supported the release of 913 children, including 242 girls, from armed groups and provided socio-economic support for the reintegration of 1,669 children, including 431 girls. A total of 4,520 child victims of physical and sexual violence in emergency or non-emergency settings, including 1,953 girls, received holistic care. In addition, 121,514 children, including 53,611 girls, received psychosocial and recreational support in a safe environment in either child-friendly spaces or other child-care facilities. In Bangui, 332 child victims of violence were registered by the special brigade for minors. The children were provided with necessary support including family mediation and alternative care solution, in coordination with MINUSCA and UNDP.

UNICEF CAR supported the Ministry of Social Affairs to strengthen coordination and management of the child protection sector at national level, as well as to support children and families at community level, through decentralized social affairs services and child protection community-level networks. Support developed the capacity of 780 local government service providers and civil society in child protection.

With the adoption of the national strategy on prevention of gender-based violence including child marriage, Government and civil society actors carried out activities to raise awareness. Community-based mechanisms such as child protection networks and youth clubs were reinforced to address harmful social norms including child marriage, sexual violence and female genital mutilation. A total of 57,143 adolescents participated in the activities end child marriage and harmful practices countrywide.

Goal area 4. Every child lives in a safe and clean environment

Under its regular programme, UNICEF CAR and its partners provided 27,500 people who live in areas of relative stability with safe drinking water through the construction of 12 mechanized boreholes and 24 manual drilling boreholes and the rehabilitation of 43 boreholes. Also, 79 water point committees were set up or revitalized. The WASH response addressed emergency-needs following outbreaks of monkey pox, yellow fever and Hepatitis E. UNICEF CAR, non-government and government counterparts and private sector partners provided access to safe

drinking water to 122,163 people affected by humanitarian emergencies. In total, 61,748 people received access to basic sanitation.

During the reporting year, 115 villages with 42,400 people were certified 'open-defecation free'. Through the WASH programmes, 2,649 students from five primary schools had access to basic sanitation through the construction of gender-separated latrines. Essential hygiene promotion activities were conducted through community-led total sanitation programme, involving national non-government organizations as implementing partners; 80,700 people were sensitized on handwashing with soap and good hygiene practices.

In total, 19,600 students including 9,248 girls from ten primary schools were sensitized on good hygiene practices including maintenance of WASH facilities. Fifty school teachers were trained to sensitize children on good hygiene practices and WASH-related disease issues. As part of the humanitarian response, national and international non-government organizations sensitized 100,998 people on good hygiene practices through public awareness campaigns, focus groups and during home visits.

A total of 5,000 women affected by violent conflict in Alindao (Basse Kotto) were sensitized on menstrual hygiene management and received dignity kits; 647 girls in school were sensitized on menstrual hygiene and received kits for menstrual hygiene management.

In partnership with Pan-African Water and Sanitation for All and two national non-government organizations, the manual drilling programme involving children and young people released from armed groups continued to be professionalised. The initiative promotes income-generation and economic integration of the children. Two associations of manual drillers recognized by national authorities were created by the children. The approach considers multiple social, economic and environmental cost-benefits of the intervention, meeting the needs of highly vulnerable people while building their capacity to adapt to the impacts of climate change and reducing adverse environmental impacts.

UNICEF CAR supported the participation of Ministry of Hydraulic Resources' representatives in the sub-regional workshop of 'AfricaSan5' in Gabon and in the Mahatma Gandhi International Sanitation Convention in India, positioning WASH on the national agendas and priorities. The government officials supported the re-deployment of the representatives of the ministry at local levels, who in turn reinforced the national results monitoring mechanism. Data collected fed into the national data base. Ministry staff were able to reach areas that are inaccessible to UNICEF due to security reasons. The project also improved the country office's HACT performance.

Gender was mainstreamed in the WASH programme by construction of separate latrines for boys and girls in schools; management committees are composed equally of men and women; and WASH interventions are monitored, focusing on disaggregated data for men, women and children.

A pilot project entitled 'healthy and peaceful village' was formally handed over to the Government. The pilot approach used WASH interventions as an entry point to bring education,

child protection, health, nutrition and income-generating activities to a rural community. Due to the initiative, 2,000 people in the village of Salanga are living in a community whose men, women and youth are engaged in promoting peace and a healthy environment for all. A reflection on how the initiative could be replicated as part of the WASH programme's contribution to achieving the key results for children will be conducted in 2019.

Goal area 5. Every child has an equitable chance in life

Child poverty from a monetary and a non-monetary perspective is undocumented in the Central African Republic. The World Bank is preparing a Living Standards Measurement Study to measure the monetary-poverty ratio, and UNICEF leads a joint United Nations effort to support the Government to implement the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (MICS). As of December 2018, the field work had covered the Bangui district, representing 20 per cent of the total sample size of 11,000 households. Field work will complete in March 2019.

UNICEF CAR conducted a retrospective review of national policies which revealed that national policies (1) had unrealistic planned results; (2) an insufficient consideration of regional specificities and inequalities; (3) a trend towards the hyper centralization of consultation and decision-making processes; (4) were developed in a donor driven fashion. The review suggests a pathway to avoid these shortcomings in the future, while also addressing child wellbeing from a rights perspective.

UNICEF, in collaboration with the World Bank and ILO, supported the initial steps, including a work plan with an accountability framework, of the development of a national social protection policy by end of 2019. To date, the diagnosis using the core diagnosis methodology is underway and the result will feed a national dialogue on social protection. The World Bank and UNICEF are supporting the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and National Reconciliation in developing an integrated child protection registry. Following extensive work on consensus building, stakeholders have agreed upon a minimum conceptual framework which will guide the process.

In 2018, UNICEF and UNDP conducted a study on the mining sector in the Central African Republic, including its impact on children and the overall population. The collaborative work is part of the Mining Vision of the African Union which aims to address the paradox between the presence of rich underground resources and the high level of poverty of populations. As a result of this important study, the two agencies developed a conceptual note for a project proposal to address inclusive, socio-economic recovery in mining areas, with a focus on child protection and education in mining areas.

In line with the national youth policy and a national youth charter that addresses the issue of adolescent development, UNICEF, the Food and Agriculture Organization and United Nations Population Fund supported the Government to implement a joint project on youth. The project aims to involve adolescents and young people in social cohesion activities and conflict prevention, to reduce youth unemployment and the violence arising from frustrations due to the exclusion from the labour market. Building on previous results, UNICEF and its partners

supported the Government in reaching 187,406 youth and adolescents (45 per cent girls) who participated in or led civic engagement initiatives.

UNICEF Central African Republic is working with partners at various levels to address gender-discriminatory roles and practices. In line with the 2017 gender programmatic review that informed the country programme document, UNICEF CAR has focused its effort on violence against children/protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, and education. Strategies span those of communication for development and community engagement to system-strengthening and policy development, including communication and advocacy, service delivery and participation/youth engagement. UNICEF CAR's partnership review committee reviewed project proposals submitted by civil society partners to assess their contribution to gender equality. The country office expects that these advances will be strengthened once a gender specialist is on board; recruitment was hampered by lack of funding in 2018.

Other cross-cutting work

Humanitarian response

UNICEF Central African Republic delivered humanitarian assistance against the targets outlined in the 2018 Humanitarian Action for Children, that focused on identifying and assessing the needs of the most vulnerable, crisis-affected populations and providing a response based on the UNICEF Core Commitments for Children. Unfortunately, funding gaps did not allow UNICEF CAR to reach all the Humanitarian Action for Children targets, while the humanitarian situation continued to deteriorate.

By November 2018, the number of internally displaced people in the country had increased to 643,000, a 7 per cent rise from 2017, with an estimated 2.5 million persons affected by the crisis. Humanitarian access is a significant challenge due to the volatile security situation and increased targeting of aid workers. In 2018, OCHA recorded 396 attacks against aid workers, a 17 per cent increase over 2017. Using the cluster approach, UNICEF continued to work closely with line ministries to strengthen government capacity in humanitarian response. In 2018, UNICEF Central African Republic took steps to strengthen its four field offices in Bouar, Bossangoa, Bambari and KagaBandoro, reinforcing the role their 40 staff play in programme implementation, including the development of an accountability framework.

The rapid response mechanism, led by UNICEF CAR since 2013, continued to be an essential part of the country office's emergency response. The rapid response mechanism and its three non-government organization partners covered about 75 per cent of the country with a humanitarian surveillance system, which in 2018 recorded 84 confirmed alerts, almost all conflict related. The alerts led to a total of 29 exploratory missions and 38 multi-sector assessments. As a result, 43 non-food item distributions took place reaching 237,131 vulnerable children and their family members with essential household items to replace crisis-related loss and destruction. The 33 WASH-relief operations, mostly conducted alongside the non-food item distributions, benefitted 162,173 people. They included the rehabilitation of 143 water points, the construction of 56 emergency latrines as well as 216 group hygiene promotion

sessions. In 2018, the rapid response mechanism piloted voucher-based, non-food item fairs and unconditional cash transfers as alternatives to non-food item distributions and plans to further develop the approaches in 2019. The information gathered through the humanitarian surveillance system, as well as the assessment reports shared with the humanitarian community, allowed for responses in sectors not covered by rapid response mechanism.

UNICEF CAR started using the rapid response mechanism as an entry point to facilitate and enable complementary UNICEF responses for increased multi-sector impact. In November, following the attack of the Batangafo internally displaced persons site by armed groups, UNICEF responded to acute child-protection and education needs alongside the rapid response mechanism's non-food item intervention, and also contributed to the immunization and WASH responses. As soon as the security context allowed it, and in the absence of immediately available partners, UNICEF education and child protection staff from the Bangui office directly implemented initial response in these sectors. Until partners could take over, they worked with support from the UNICEF Security Advisor, an emergency specialist and Bossangoa and KagaBando field office staff, also deployed to Batangafo.

In 2018, UNICEF CAR continued to lead the nutrition, education and WASH clusters and coordinated the child protection sub-cluster, in addition to being an active member of the health cluster facilitated by the World Health Organization. In these functions, UNICEF Central African Republic ensured effective humanitarian leadership and accountability.

Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse

Since 2014, a total of 302 sexual exploitation and abuse allegations against children were recorded by UNICEF. An analysis of reported sexual exploitation and abuse allegations shows that the incidents peaked between 2014 and 2015, and were reported in 2016. It appears that there is a downward trend. In 2018, 17 sexual exploitation and abuse allegations against children were reported in 11 significant incident reports. The alleged perpetrators of the reported sexual exploitation and abuse cases were MINUSCA or MISCA elements for 14 cases; a non-United Nations international force element for one case; and non-government organization staff for two cases. The alleged victims were provided with the necessary assistance by UNICEF and its partners. Field victim rights advocates, in collaboration with the humanitarian protection from sexual exploitation and abuse task force, conducted a mapping to identify challenges to service availability for victims of sexual exploitation and abuse. In 2018, a total of 4,439 children (1,893 girls) who were victims of physical and sexual violence were provided with holistic support.

UNICEF reinforced the protection from sexual exploitation and abuse coordination mechanism and supported development of two new protocols in the Central African Republic. One protocol, related to information-sharing, was adopted on 3 September 2018 by the Special Representative of the Secretary General as well as protection from sexual exploitation and abuse humanitarian actors. The second is a draft protocol on victim assistance, which is under validation. The initiatives improved the quality and consistency of interventions in terms of prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse.

A total of 131 UNICEF staff completed the online mandatory training on sexual exploitation and abuse for United Nations personnel. In addition, 94 UNICEF staff (26 female) participated in a protection from sexual exploitation and abuse orientation at an office retreat in October 2018. All the focal points for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, based in Bangui and in the four field offices, received a specific training and have terms of reference.

UNICEF CAR coordinates a programme supporting 'accountability to affected people', endorsed by the Humanitarian Country Team; US\$455,426 was secured from Swedish International Development Coordination Agency (SIDA) in 2018 to start key interventions. The Department for International Development indicated that it would also support the initiative through OCHA. UNICEF partnered with the Danish Refugee Council to use an existing community-feedback hotline that received over 6,652 calls in 2018. Interventions that incorporate performing arts (such as slam, puppets, cinema) in internally displaced persons' sites or host communities were crafted, and will be rolled out in 2019.

Change strategies

Programming for at-scale results for children

As part of an evidence-based, system-strengthening strategy, UNICEF CAR advocated with the Government and the World Bank to ensure that the 19 districts that implement 'reach every district with immunization' - or 54 per cent of total districts - are covered by the performance-based finance project. The strategy insures that services are accompanied by service providers' motivation at the peripheral level.

UNICEF CAR contracted 50 health providers through GAVI funds to strengthen service delivery capacities in most deprived districts. Under the terms of the agreement with the Government, the 50 employees will be integrated into the civil service and paid from the state budget from 2020 onwards. In addition to two trucks for district supplies, six vehicles were acquired to strengthen supervision to support governance and decision making in the health sector.

Winning support for children

Develop and leverage resources and partnerships for children

During the first year of its new programme cycle 2018-2021, UNICEF Central African Republic mobilized 39 per cent of the other resources' ceiling planned in the four-year country programme document.

Strong liaison with the Private Fundraising and Partnerships Division and UNICEF National Committees resulted in funds from the Spanish, Dutch, French, United Kingdom and United States Committees for UNICEF.

Donor reports were submitted on time based on an internal alert system that gave time to produce quality reports. Funding was optimally used, and UNICEF Central African Republic

maintained systems, including monthly monitoring dashboards, reports, and country management team meetings to monitor the use of funds and avoid unnecessary extensions or loss of funds.

UNICEF CAR worked with the Division of Communication and the Public Partnership Division to develop and launch a Child Alert in November. The report was echoed in major global media outlets, such as BBC World radio, Al Jazeera, The Guardian Global Development, Voice of America, RFI, Reuters and other media in the region. Child Alert media products were developed to meet fundraising content needs of the National Committees for UNICEF. While it's difficult to attribute with certainty the funding received with the release of the Child Alert report, pledges amounting to nearly US\$5.8 million were received in the month that followed its launch.

Working with media networks globally, UNICEF CAR engaged the public on the impact of the Central African Republic crisis on children and women. UNICEF facilitated field visits and interview requests with major global media outlets, with more than a dozen stories in major global media (Al Jazeera, Deutsche Welle, The Telegraph, Newsweek, Reuters, France 24, RFI, Liberation and The Guardian). UNICEF also reached an audience through social media with more than 72,000 followers on Facebook, and over 7,200 followers on Twitter.

The communication for development portfolio was reshuffled to focus on UNICEF CAR priorities, including the two regional key results for children (immunization and child protection from violence) and two office specific priorities (severe acute malnutrition and quality education in an emergency context). Existing partnerships (with Catholic Scouts, Mentor Initiative and Radio Ndekeluka) were strengthened, for greater results and to integrate a stronger cross-sectoral

New partnerships were also established. The Cinéma Numérique Ambulant, consisting of mobile screenings in areas where people have no access to media, reached 40,000 people on six themes (Ebola Virus Disease, immunization, HIV, birth registration, education and WASH). A group of young people practicing capoeira were provided skills to dialogue with children in- and out-of-school settings. The pilot will pave the way to a 'sport for development' programme, which does not exist in the Central African Republic yet. A group of clowns, puppeteers and traditional storytellers (known as 'the parrots') were trained to interact with internally displaced peoples on healthy behaviour change. A documentary film on the role of entertainment in communication for development interventions is being produced to document the experience in the Central African Republic. These innovative approaches have reinforced communication for development and also contributed to build trust between government entities and civil society organizations.

UNICEF advocated to include performance indicators on nutrition and community health in the performance-based financing project of the World Bank-funded health system support and strengthening project (SENI) which covers 372 health centres in 15 health districts (of the 35 in the Central African Republic). Performance-based financing will reach communities in the

health facilities' catchment areas. UNICEF CAR helped develop CAR's investment case for allocation from the Global Financing Facility by providing technical support (staff and consultant), and advocating with the Government and partners to use the combination of EQUIST and One Health tools to plan and cost priority interventions.

United Nations working together

In 2018, two statutory reviews of United Nations Development Assistant Framework (UNDAF) Plus were conducted. UNICEF CAR has a leading role in UNDAF coordination groups at the programme and operations levels; and continued to be involved in ongoing joint youth and human-security projects. A number of United Nations agencies, including UNAIDS, United Nations Population Fund, UNICEF, World Food Programme, World Health Organization, Food and Agriculture Organisation and International Labour Organisation, developed a joint proposal submitted to the Multi-Partner Trust Fund to mobilize resources for the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey. This helped raise 53 per cent of the budget required for the survey. UNICEF CAR also positioned the Department of Foreign Affairs Monitoring as the UNDAF monitoring tool.

UNICEF CAR co-leads the United Nations Country Team and the Humanitarian Country Team communication groups, therefore ensuring that the situation of children and women in the Central African Republic receives priority attention in the teams' messages and communications.

Regarding pooling of resources, a memorandum of understanding was signed with UNHCR and its local partner for the maintenance of UNICEF vehicles and the transportation of fuel to field offices. The initiative will save costs and increase productivity.

Under UNICEF's leadership of the operations management team, efforts were initiated to enhance inter-agency collaboration under the business operation strategy. Given the domestic challenges pertaining to supply, exploration of new markets, particularly in Cameroon, is improving programme implementation, for example: quality material for the back-to-school campaign was available on time in September. In 2018, savings were estimated at US\$ 260,000.

Staff and premise security was an area of focus. Enhancement measures included CCTV; the guard's house improvement; a safe-haven; a stand-off distance and speed bumps. These will be brought to the operations management team in 2019 for possible economies of scale.

Exploratory discussions for a UN House in the Central African Republic started in 2018.

Part 3: Lessons learned and constraints

WASH

WASH programme ownership by national partners increased with better involvement of the state services. In the Central African Republic's context, this helped restore the presence of state actors who provide social services at decentralized level, and the sustainability of interventions. The approach will be maintained and systematized in 2019. Regular government field monitoring of activities, involving a technical monitoring group from the ministry in charge of planning, reinforced the national results' monitoring mechanism. The community-approach is a factor of sustainability of interventions, and the community-led total sanitation will continue as the contribution to the UNICEF Global Game to end open defecation.

Education

With the resurgence of violence and insecurity in many areas of the country, schools are systematically targeted for destruction as are temporary learning spaces. Many were burned down in 2018. During such events, UNICEF is often faced with the need to change partners during the implementation of an emergency project. In two instances, the country office faced the dilemma between working with a limited pool of national non-government organizations with weak capacity, or international non-government organizations that are prone to staff evacuation and interrupted assistance.

To address the risks related to contracting national non-government organizations with limited technical and financial management capacity, UNICEF strengthened the quality-assurance approach and implementation of the harmonized approach to cash transfers framework. This is accompanied, when circumstances permit, by regular field and programme visits; coordination meetings; and UNICEF leadership in regional, sub-cluster groups of zonal offices, and academic inspectorate involvement in the monitoring and evaluation of interventions. In the prefectures of Ouaka and Haute Kotto, for example, where violence, looting and deadly attacks by armed groups led international non-government organizations to evacuate staff, national non-government organization partners such as ECAC, IDEAL and Espérance stayed and delivered, even in hard-to-reach areas, and contributed to achieve results of the PCAs and above all to key results for children's learning.

Health

Starting in 2015, UNICEF supported the implementation of integrated community case management in hard-to-reach areas in six prefectures, with the objective of ensuring the quality management of childhood diseases (malaria, diarrhoea, acute respiratory infections, malnutrition). Since the country did not have policy and strategic documents on integrated community case management, UNICEF has availed an international expert to support the Ministry of Health in developing tools and guidelines for the implementation of the project. Given the weak national capacity on integrated community case management, UNICEF signed agreements with non-government organizations (national and international) to support implementation of the activities. Implementation was delayed due to many factors, including the low Ministry of Health capacity to lead the process and insecurity, but 193 community sites (against 190 planned) were put in place after three years.

This unique experience in CAR, though fraught with difficulties and setbacks, informs

discussion on community-health approaches with key players such as the World Bank and the European Union.

Partnership management

The programme environment continues to show medium to high risk. The harmonised approach to cash transfers insurance activities involved risk related to financial management and internal control procedures among many national partners. An analysis of the partner portfolio revealed that the number of implementing partners is relatively high, which limits UNICEF CAR's ability to carry out assurance activities as per the agreed plan. Starting in 2019, the country office plans to be more strategic in the choice of partners by strengthening the selection mechanisms with focus on comparative advantages, geographical positioning and the ability to deliver results for children. Third-party monitoring will be effective from February 2019 in hard-to-reach areas.

Human resource management and staff well-being

UNICEF CAR prioritizes the development of staff capacity, ethical behaviour and diversity, building on efforts started in 2017. A performance management workshop, that promoted a 'culture of feedback' and a career development workshop were organized and appreciated, especially by national staff. The gender gap was reduced by three points, as the percentage of women in the office rose from 21 to 24 per cent.

Staff well-being was a priority: discussions were on-going at timely and focused Joint Consultative Committee meetings; a two-day staff retreat resulted in a plan of action and an open-door policy by senior management. In a context where access to quality health care is a major concern, a webinar with the Division of Human Resources shed light on how staff can access medical services and clarified medical evacuation procedures. The country office had a staff counsellor on temporary appointment until November 2018 and reinforced its pool of peer support volunteers with two additional, newly-trained staff.

Information, communication and development

The Central African Republic faces information, communication and development challenges, including issues with tele-communication; information, communication and development capacity; and the overall basic information, communication and development infrastructure. In 2018, the acquisition of new laptops improved staff mobility and performance. Productivity was enhanced by standardizing LAN-connectivity and implanting 'universal Wi-Fi-guest'. To mitigate risk of fire in the Bangui office, a provider was contracted to renew the electrical system and install a central UPS system.

With the UNICEF Regional Office support, digital health solutions was introduced and an e-health pilot project launched despite challenges including a lack of in-country optical fibre (thus reliability on the VSAT); power supply issues; limited competition; and low 3/4G Data Mobile connectivity coverage.

Security

The need to deliver assistance while ensuring staff security is a constant concern for the office. To strengthen security of UNICEF personnel during field missions, avoid unnecessary risk and better monitor staff movement, a new security procedure including personnel, equipment, vehicles, communication and movements was established. It integrates the programme criticality assessment results against the prevailing and projected residual risk in the specific mission area.

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