Two out of five children that UNICEF expected to help this year are left without access to health, water, education or protection due to critical funding shortfall and insecurity.
UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador Mia Farrow visited Central African Republic in July this year.

“In the midst of this grim scenario, there are unsung heroes: Doctors and health workers are risking their lives to save the wounded and the sick. Religious leaders, both Muslim and Christian, are sheltering displaced families regardless of ethnicity or religious preference.”
The crisis at a glance

December 5
On 5 December, anti-Balaka militias and armed elements loyal to former President François Bozizé launch an attack against Séléka forces in Bangui. Hundreds of people are killed and almost two-thirds of the capital’s residents are displaced — 500,000 at its peak.

December 7 - 12
First rapid assessments by UNICEF and partners of the impact of the violence. Within five days, the first UNICEF cargo flight delivers 75 metric tonnes of emergency supplies to Bangui – enough to help 37,000 people.

December 9
UNICEF declares the crisis in the Central African Republic a ‘Level 3 Emergency’, which represents UNICEF’s highest level of humanitarian crisis - helping trigger more resources and expediting administrative procedures for the response.

December 19
African Union peace-keeping mission launches in the Central African Republic.

January 20
Interim president Catherine Samba-Panza is elected by the national transitional council.

2012
Conflict starts with the first clashes between rebel armed groups and government forces in northern Central African Republic.

March
Seleka, a coalition of rebel armed groups, enters the capital city Bangui and overthrows President François Bozize.

2013

August
Clashes and displacement in the western part of the Central African Republic, mostly in Bossangoa. UNICEF provides assistance for more than 50,000 internally displaced people in Bossangoa, including plastic sheeting, buckets, soap, hygiene kits, health, nutrition, water, sanitation and child protection services.

Peak of violence
December 2013
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 10</td>
<td>By April, over 20,000 people from minority groups were living in enclaves and more than 200,000 refugees had fled the Central African Republic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>A new wave of fighting and vicious attacks hits the Central African Republic in the last week of March threatening vulnerable families. UNICEF warns that thousands of children, from both Muslim and Christian communities, are especially at risk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>More than half way through the 12-month school year, almost two thirds of schools in the Central African Republic remain closed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 25</td>
<td>A new wave of violence in Bangui, the capital erupted and displaces an extra 23,000 people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 18</td>
<td>UNICEF and partners announce that they have secured the release of more than 1300 children associated with armed forces and groups in the Central African Republic since January.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 15</td>
<td>New United Nations peacekeeping mission launched in the Central African Republic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>Fresh fighting in northern and western regions of the country and an upsurge of violence in the capital Bangui worsen insecurity and put humanitarian access in jeopardy.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
A forgotten crisis

Children in the Central African Republic are no longer in the world’s headlines, but they still bear the brunt of the violence that engulfed most of the country one year ago. In December 2013, the country – already weakened by years of instability - quickly descended into a complex humanitarian crisis.

Soon after, fighting in the capital reached a peak as armed and community-based, self-defence groups calling themselves Anti-Balaka rose up in revenge against ex-Seleka, a rebel group who had orchestrated a coup nine months earlier. The violence spread out across the country, with large scale human rights abuses committed on both sides, followed by a serious deterioration in the humanitarian situation.

One year later, about 2.5 million children are still affected, and more than 850,000 people, or nearly a fifth of the country’s population, remain displaced in the Central African Republic and neighbouring countries.

Beyond Central African Republic

Effects on children in Cameroon, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo and Congo

Violence in the Central African Republic has led to the massive displacement of hundreds of thousands of refugees, returnees and third-country nationals into neighbouring Cameroon, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Congo.

Over 80% of the people fleeing violence in the Central African Republic are children and women. UNICEF also provides emergency assistance to displaced families and host communities in neighbouring countries:

Mass displacement risks destabilizing sub-region

• **2.5 million** children affected out of **4.6 million** people

• More than **850,000** people remain displaced in the Central African Republic and neighbouring countries

(UNHCR, 5 December 2014)
One of the world’s toughest places for children

The crisis in the Central African Republic is a children’s emergency. Every day this year, UNICEF recorded at least one case of a child killed or maimed. Up to 10,000 children have been forced into armed groups. Thousands of others have been separated from their families, mutilated, abducted and sexually abused.

Nearly half a million children have been displaced this year. Among the most vulnerable are those hiding in the bush or living in enclaves besieged by armed groups. These children live in constant fear, have virtually no access to basic services and rely entirely on humanitarian aid, which is regularly hampered due to frequent surges of violence throughout the country.

A year of violence and upheaval

A spike in violence in late 2014 is proof that the situation is still far from stabilised and that children are more vulnerable than ever. The conflict is complex, with an increasing and splintering number of armed groups, distrust between ethnic groups and a proliferation of small arms.

Families from minorities remain at high risk of violence, even massacre, in enclaves across the Western and Central regions of the country. Even in places with improved security, families returning home have found themselves destitute – their villages burned and looted.

In a world beset by large-scale emergencies, the children of the Central African Republic must not be forgotten.

On the ground before, during and after the crisis

UNICEF’s quick response to protect children

UNICEF was present in the Central African Republic before the crisis, during the crisis, and will continue to work to improve the lives of children into the future. In August 2013, several thousand people fled clashes in Bossangoa, in the western part of the Central African Republic. UNICEF was one of the first humanitarian actors to distribute plastic sheeting, buckets, hygiene kits and other emergency supplies to these displaced families.

Only a few days after the violence further escalated in the capital Bangui in December 2013, the crisis was declared a ‘Level 3 Emergency’ by UNICEF – the maximum possible level. With more than 150 staff on the ground throughout the country, UNICEF rapidly scaled up its humanitarian operations in response to the escalating crisis, opening new offices in Bossangoa, Bambari, Bouar, Zemio, Ndele and Kaga Bandoro.

In 2014, our teams on the ground reached at least 1.4 million people with access to basic health, water, sanitation, nutrition, education and child protection services. UNICEF also leads the coordination of humanitarian efforts in several thematic areas, namely education, nutrition, water and sanitation and child protection.
A country in the middle of Africa, one of the poorest in the world, now in the middle of a violent crisis which has displaced a quarter of the population. Why should we care about the Central African Republic? We should care because the Central African Republic is Remy’s home.

When we met him, he was living in a camp for displaced people with his family. But he was still working to treat the thousands of people who fled to the bush when their villages were ransacked and burned by rebels. He would ride along the rough dirt roads in the far west of the country; hide his motorcycle under a pile of branches; and then hike through the bush with his medical box to where people were hiding. He treated the sick before hiking back to the motorcycle and riding back to the tent where he lived.

There are thousands of ‘everyday heroes’ like him. The men who volunteer to clean out the toilets at displacement camps; the volunteers who get into rickety canoes to transport vaccinations to remote communities; the priests who shelter Muslim families; the Imams who preach peace and those who negotiate the release of children from armed groups.

The Central African Republic is poor, but it’s not poor in spirit. It is in the middle of a violent crisis; but let’s not ignore the ordinary people working for peace against all the odds.
CHILD PROTECTION
Across the country, communities have been uprooted, fragmented and traumatised by the events of the past year. Violence has turned some communities against each other, with violations against children sinking to new depths of brutality.

UNICEF estimates that up to 10,000 children are now associated with armed groups, forced to fight alongside adults, or used as porters, cooks, and servants. One in four recruited children are girls, who are particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse.

According to UNICEF, at least one child is killed or maimed in the country every day. The stories of these children reveal the horror of the crisis, such as cases of children who were killed while seeking sanctuary in churches or going to school. Others have been hacked with machetes and maimed after grenades exploded near where they were playing. These are only some of the grave violations that have been verified; the actual numbers of children who have died as a result of the crisis are much higher, including deaths caused by the collapse of health services.

“Some of my friends who went into battle never returned. Those who did return from operations told us that our friends were dead. I would go to sleep every night afraid that I would wake up with an order to go to the front.”

Andre, 17, was released from an armed group in the Central African Republic and supported by UNICEF and partners to reintegrate into the community.

UNICEF’S RESPONSE

• More than 2,100 children released from armed forces

• Psycho-social support provided to nearly 65,000 children affected by the conflict

• 540 unaccompanied children reunited with their families

• Medical and psychological support given to more than 2,200 survivors of sexual violence
Throughout the country, armed groups are using sexual violence against children and women to terrorise communities and break family ties. UNICEF and partners have provided support to more than 2,200 survivors of sexual violence. Fear of retribution and lack of access to services often prevents children and women from reporting rapes and other crimes, and child protection experts believe that these recorded cases are only a small fraction of the total abuse.

Children have been torn from their families amidst widespread displacements and killings. To date, UNICEF has reunited 540 children who had been separated from their families. Many of these children tell stories of walking alone for days until they found sanctuary. Some never find this sanctuary and are instead abused and are at risk of being exploited by armed groups.

WHAT WE WORK TOWARDS IN 2015

- **5,000** children released from armed forces and groups will be integrated with the community and have access to alternative education opportunities
- **4,000** women and girls identified as survivors of sexual violence will have access to support
- **100,000** displaced and vulnerable children will participate in psychosocial activities

Life trickles back to burnt town in the Central African Republic

As the air in her village became acrid with smoke from 3000 burning houses, Veronique Nem gathered her 11 children, grabbed her stock of food, and ran into the bush. The sound of gunfire and the shouts of armed men faded the further she ran. They ended up at her family’s small farming plot, where they grow manioc.
What she didn’t know then, was that her family would remain “hiding in the bush” for six months, in a shelter made from tree branches, eating wild vegetables and fruits, and drinking swamp water.

During these months of scarcity, her children kept on getting sick. By the time Veronique walked back into town six months later, she had lost one of her children. The child had fallen sick and she could not get treatment in time to save her.

Town at centre of conflict

Bohong, Veronique’s hometown, had been an established community in the west of the Central African Republic – with a large clinic, schools and a population of more than 20,000 people. But in 2013, it became the scene of heavy fighting after which 15,000 people fled. Bohong was almost a ghost town for six months.

After the rebel withdrawal in March this year, people started returning to their homes to re-build and re-start their lives.

UNICEF was there to play its part in supporting this return. In partnership with the Lutheran World Federation, UNICEF restored 11 boreholes in Bohong and distributed jerry cans and soap. Plastic toilets bases (sanitation platforms) were given to households, who then dug their own latrines.

Looking towards tomorrow

In the west of the Central African Republic, families who had been hiding in the bush are increasingly returning to their destroyed homes and villages. In these areas, UNICEF is changing its focus from emergency response to rehabilitating basic social services.

You can still see the burnt houses as you drive into Bohong. And the town still has a feeling of emptiness. Veronique’s house was burned so she’s living in the home of another family who have fled the violence and haven’t returned since.

We ask her what her hopes are for tomorrow. Her list covers the essentials: “I want the school to reopen, I want free health care, and I want peace.”
The conflict has been disastrous for the health of children and women. Even before the crisis, one in six children in the Central African Republic died before the age of five, and the country had the third highest rate of maternal mortality in the world.

During the violence, one third of health clinics were destroyed or looted and medical staff abandoned their posts due to insecurity. The destruction of many health centres meant that services – including routine immunization – were suddenly discontinued, with the country’s cold chain devastated and vaccines lost.

Displacement puts children at even greater risk of the two biggest childhood killers – malaria and diarrhoea. The situation worsened, as many people were forced to leave their homes and belongings behind and live in make-shift dwellings with few – if any – barriers against mosquitoes, and limited access to latrines, soap and safe water.

New data shows that rates of stunting (where children are too small for their age because of chronic malnutrition) have increased from 34% to 40% in two years.

The country has one of the highest adult HIV prevalence rates in Central Africa, with an overall estimated prevalence of 7.8 per cent for adults. During the crisis, the majority of people could not access HIV testing or treatment, because health centres were closed and there was a shortage of drug supplies at a national level – increasing the risk of transmission, growing drug resistance in the population and leaving pregnant women with HIV unable to protect their new-borns from transmission.

UNICEF’s RESPONSE

- More than 1 million children vaccinated against polio
- 550,000 mosquito nets distributed in homes
- 22,300 children treated for severe acute malnutrition
- Nearly 1.4 million people received basic health services and medicines
- More than 36,000 women counselled on HIV prevention and treatment
WHAT WE WORK TOWARDS IN 2015

- **732,000** children under five immunized against measles
- **1,171,400** million people with access to basic health services and medicines
- **22,700** children under five affected by severe acute malnutrition admitted for treatment
- **21,000** women sensitized on infant and young child feeding practices
- **4,250** children born to mothers living with HIV receive appropriate treatment
- **77,380** pregnant women receive HIV/AIDS counselling
- **25,000** young people receive HIV/AIDS counselling and are tested
“I wasn’t able to take my baby to the clinic for the last four months, because of the violence where I live,” Claudia said. “She missed out on some vaccinations, but I didn’t know which ones. When we ran away from our house, we lost her vaccination card.”

Claudia’s daughter Melanie was protected from measles, yellow fever and polio in a vaccination campaign supported by UNICEF.

“In the two months since I was diagnosed with HIV, my only source of strength and comfort was my Mother to Child Transmission Support Group.”

Miriam’s family house was burnt down by rebels who shot her husband dead. She sought shelter at a church, where community mobilisers encouraged her to take a free HIV test. She was horrified when she tested positive, and discovered that her baby girl was also infected.
The new operating theatre currently under construction.
In this hospital, everybody gets treated

A small building dating back to 1936 stands in the shadow of the new operating theatre constructed with support from UNICEF in Berberati. It was the hospital’s existing operating theatre, nearly 80 years old; it had only the most basic equipment and one small generator – no oxygen machine, no heart monitor, and no gas for administering anaesthetics.

This is where Dr Jean Thierry Behounde has been performing basic surgeries since he arrived as chief of medicine in Berberati in 2012. Before the wave of violence hit Berberati in January of 2014, Dr Behounde performed mostly caesareans. But with the arrival of rebel groups, the number of bullet wounds has tripled the load of operations per week from 10 to 30.

“The existing operating theatre is at capacity. We are a centre of referral for people in a 100km radius of here, as well as the 180,000 people who live in Berberati,” Dr Behounde said. “Complicated surgeries are impossible with the lack of equipment. We have had a lot of infections because it is difficult to keep everything sterile in such an old building.”

Hospital for everyone

There is a sign on the entrance to the Berberati Hospital that says: “I don’t want to know who you are, what you do, your race, or your religion; you are suffering and that is enough.”

As different rebel groups have fought for control of Berberati over the past six months, the staff have been threatened trying to uphold this mission.

“You can still find lots of shells of bullets on the hospital grounds,” said Dr Behounde as he shows us a bullet he extracted from a patient recently. The city’s mayor fled, the directors of all the government departments fled, but the doctor stayed.

Even as the conflict took on an ethno-religious element, “we continued to treat Muslims and Christians alike,” Dr Behounde said.

“When the rebels took over the city, I slept at the hospital. I asked the armed men to stay outside the front gates. But I couldn’t stop them when they stole the hospital’s only vehicle.”

Operating theatre ‘will save lives’

Dr Behounde says it will be a relief to move into the new operating block. Built with funds donated by UNICEF Italy, the block will feature two large operating rooms with air-conditioners, two rooms dedicated to sterilization, prep and recovery rooms, and offices for hospital staff.

“This new operating theatre will save lives,” said Dr Behounde.
EDUCATION
Learning - with or without schools

Education has been a casualty of the ongoing conflict, with over half of schools across the country closed at some point in 2014. At the peak of the conflict, a third of schools were either struck by bullets, set on fire, looted or occupied by armed groups.

According to a survey conducted in 2014, more than a quarter of a million children who were enrolled in 2013 were not in school in 2014, and many teachers didn’t go back to work because of insecurity and a lack of or late salary payments.

The long-term closure of schools has put children at an increased risk of abuse, including recruitment into armed groups, sexual violence and exploitation. There is a very real danger of leaving a generation of children uneducated if all schools are not urgently re-opened, and supported to be fully operational.

A back-to-school campaign was launched in late November to encourage 662,000 children back into classrooms. By the end of December, UNICEF and partners will provide education supplies, such as school-in-a-box materials and school backpacks to approximately 400,000 students, as part of nationwide efforts led by local authorities.

UNICEF’S RESPONSE

- Safe temporary learning spaces for 60,170 children throughout the country, providing educational and recreational activities and child protection services, including psycho-social support

- Back-to-school campaign to help 662,000 children resume their studies, as schools gradually reopen in safer areas of the country

- School essentials distributed to more than 115,500 students, and classrooms and toilets repaired in 200 schools that have been damaged in the violence

“Rebuilding education is the basis of everything. I want to make sure that the students in my class don’t act out with violence and retribution, but instead with honesty and gentleness. I want my children to recover from the bad things they have seen.”

Antoinette, is a teacher who managed a UNICEF-supported temporary learning space in a displacement site in Bangui
WHAT WE WORK TOWARDS IN 2015

• **60,000** displaced children between three to 17 years old have access to education opportunities

• **400,000** children affected by the crisis receive learning and playing materials

• **550** schools receive support to rehabilitate damaged classrooms

“I lived in a displacement camp for three months with my family after the violence broke out in Central African Republic. All I wanted was to go back to my old school. My teachers here care about me and work hard. I want to become a teacher when I grow up.”

Stephanie, 13, is back at school thanks to UNICEF.
Brave teachers re-open dusty classrooms

WHEN headmistress Madame Gpoili re-opened the doors to her primary school, she had no teaching materials.

“I bought my own chalk to work, as well as some notebooks and pens for the children,” she said. All were bought from her modest teacher’s wage. Her six fellow teachers did the same.

The classrooms were dusty after three months closed up during the height of the violence in Berberati, a city in the far west of the Central African Republic. But Madame Gpoili believed that re-starting education would give children a sense of normality and hope in the future. She re-opened in April this year, but by July only half of the school’s 600 students had returned.

“The children have to have courage to come to school,” she said. Things are still not 100% calm in the city. “Parents are still scared to let their children out of the house.”

Hundreds of thousands of children in conflict-hit Central African Republic – some of whom have missed up to two years of formal education – will have the chance to get back to school in December as a campaign gets underway. The initiative, supported by UNICEF, aims to help 662,000 children resume their studies, as schools gradually reopen in safer areas of the country. The previous two academic years have been interrupted by insecurity across the country.

Madame Gpoili believes that opening her school gave the community faith that peace would return to the city. UNICEF played its part by distributing school kits to students. Inside the kits were notebooks, pens and pencils, erasers and sharpeners.

Visiting the school, you can see nearly all the students carrying their UNICEF kits. Madame Gpoili also made an initial exception on school fees for children whose parents couldn’t afford to pay. And she teaches a class full-time because the school doesn’t yet have enough teachers.

After re-opening in April this year, she worked closely with 19 girls who wanted to sit their exams to go to secondary school. The girls came to class every day, regardless of the dangers. In mid-July, 16 out of the 19 girls passed the entrance exams.

“I’m particularly passionate about girl’s education. It’s the best way to stop early marriage. All girls should have a chance to make their own lives before they get married. And an education gives them that chance...”

“…”
Clean water and good sanitation are taken for granted in many parts of the world, but in the Central African Republic they are precious commodities made even more inaccessible by the conflict and insecurity in the country.

Looting and lack of fuel and equipment at water treatment stations disrupted the safe supply of water. Families displaced by the fighting fled into the bush and collected water from contaminated rivers, creeks and ponds.

"Before the current crisis, only half of the population had access to safe water and only one in five people had access to latrines."

The low coverage of water and sanitation services, especially in rural areas, puts children at risk of water-borne diseases like diarrhoea and cholera – in a country with the seventh highest infant mortality rate worldwide, with diarrhoea the second largest killer of young children after malaria.

UNICEF’S RESPONSE

• Safe water provided to more than 415,500 people across the country affected by the crisis, thanks to UNICEF’s support to the national water company to rehabilitate and extend urban water networks, coordinating water trucking to sites, and rehabilitating boreholes in rural areas

• More than 220,800 people have access to latrines in displacement sites and 308,300 people have received jerry cans, soap and other essentials

WHAT WE WORK TOWARDS IN 2015

• 450,000 affected people have access to sufficient safe and reliable water

• 170,000 internally displaced persons and returnees have access to improved sanitation

• 300,000 people in affected areas benefit from WASH and non-food item distributions
UNICEF WASH specialist Freddie Matchombe and SODECA engineer Henri Congo at the Bouar water treatment centre supported by Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department for the European Commission (ECHO) and UNICEF.
Rebel groups looted and attacked major water supply plants during the outbreak of violence in the Central African Republic. As taps ran dry, people were forced to turn to boreholes, which struggled with the increased demand. UNICEF had to find a solution, and fast. So we turned to local experts in the field.

There was only one way that UNICEF could supply sufficient water to the thousands of displaced people streaming in from villages to the Central African Republic’s major towns. We had to restore pillaged water supply plants. And to do that, we needed the help of local experts like Henri Congo. Having worked for the country’s national water distribution company, SODECA, for more than a decade, Henri knew how to fix problems at the pumping plant with materials he could buy at the local market. UNICEF provided the major infrastructure he needed, with the support of the European Commission’s Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO).

With a length of wiring, a cheap electricity meter, a new generator and some fuel and chlorine – Henri was able to restore safe water to 45,000 people in one of the Central African Republic’s major towns, Bossangoa. Henri is currently managing a second ECHO-funded water plant of Bouar in the north west of the country, and he has two more plants in Bozoum and Berberati to fix.

“The families I knew were suffering,” Henri told me. “There was no more water in the borehole. I had to do everything I could to give them water.”

There were doubts about whether this ambitious partnership would succeed, said UNICEF WASH specialist Freddie Mantchombe. Doubts about whether the team from the national water distribution company had enough experience in an emergency like the one they were facing.

“We said to the skeptics ‘Just wait and you will see’, “ he said. “We were convinced it would work, and it did.”

The initial aim of the project was to provide a minimum 15 litres of water per day to each person displaced by the violence.

“But by helping SODECA we were able to help everybody access safe water,” Freddie told me. “If it wasn’t for the partnership, there would have been no water for months in these major towns in the interior of the country. The water processing company had been decimated, they couldn’t pay salaries, or afford to buy fuel and chemicals.”

Ninety per cent of the water supplied through urban water supply systems in the country is supported by UNICEF – with the aim to help get SODECA on their feet again. People are starting to pay SODECA again for the water they use, and with that money, the company will be able to pay for staff and supplies itself.
DISTRIBUTION OF SUPPLIES
Reaching children wherever they are

Delivering fast, life-saving help to children affected by emergencies – wherever they strike – has been a major part of UNICEF’s work in the Central African Republic. Many children and women living in remote parts of the country have virtually no access to basic services or humanitarian assistance.

Poor road conditions and ongoing insecurity prevented humanitarian actors from responding quickly to sudden displacements. Between January and November this year, 124 security incidents against humanitarian organisations have been recorded, and 18 humanitarian workers have been killed. In the last quarter of the year, there was an increase in attacks against humanitarian vehicles and convoys, making relief operations more difficult to implement outside of urban areas.

Memouna fled her home in Berberati in the west of the Central African Republic six months ago when violence against the Muslim community reached a peak. UNICEF and partners provided her family with Emergency Kits with mats, blankets, tarpaulins, jerry cans, buckets, soap, and clothes for babies and children – as well as constructing toilets and showers on the displacement site where she lives.

“We’re waiting here until peace returns and we can go home. We are Central African and we want to stay here.”

UNICEF’S RESPONSE

• **Five** newly opened field offices opened since late 2013 in the worst-affected regions

• Nearly **US $ 9.2 million** of emergency supplies delivered across the country

• **20,600** households assisted with emergency shelter, safe water and latrines and household items such as soap, jerry cans, sleeping mats, buckets and blankets

©UNICEFCAR/2014/Logan

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Going where nobody else can

The Central African Republic is about the same size as France, but with less than 700 km of paved roads. This poses significant access issues to UNICEF and other humanitarian agencies trying to get emergency aid quickly to where it is most needed.

Earlier this year, a convoy from UNICEF headquarters in Bangui headed off to set up a new field office in the far east of the country – a town called Zemio over 1000 km drive from the capital. The roads are in bad condition, and they are dangerous. Drivers would take four days to get there overland, and require a military escort.

But delays with the escort left the drivers stranded along the way; and they only arrived with all the supplies in Zemio two weeks later.

There are tracts of the Central African Republic where there is no humanitarian presence, because they are too dangerous or too remote. But these are exactly the places where UNICEF needs to be if we are to live up to our mission to help the most disadvantaged children: those who are hardest to reach.

In response to this challenge, UNICEF co-ordinates a Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) to reach otherwise inaccessible areas in the Central African Republic. Their aim is to respond within 15 days of being alerted about an outbreak of violence or displacement.

It works like this: rapid response teams carry out special assessments that measure families’ vulnerability in health, access to food, water, sanitation and availability of household items like buckets, sleeping mats and soap. The teams target their response based on the findings of these assessments; and quickly organize distributions, using supplies and funding they have received in advance.

After fighting in the northern town of Batanfago in August, three different rapid response teams quickly mobilized to carry out assessments in new displacement sites and distribute essentials like soap, jerry cans, sleeping mats, buckets and blankets to more than 6300 families in Batangafo and five nearby towns.

The rapid response teams recently carried out distributions in two villages near Bambari, which has been a violent hotspot since June. They will provide emergency kits like the ones distributed in Batangafo, as well as build emergency latrines for about 1500 families who have recently been displaced after attacks on their villages.
The rapid response teams are the provider of ‘last resort’ for women and children living in remote parts of the Central African Republic. And they build the base for longer-term assistance. The project just received $1.3 million from the European Commission’s Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department. This funding will help us to scale up our work in the hardest to reach parts of the country – and the children who would otherwise miss out.

The Rapid Response Mechanism co-ordinates NGO partners Action Against Hunger, ACTED, International Rescue Committee, PU-AMI and Solidarités International.

“The plane arriving was an indication that the people of Central African Republic had not been forgotten.”

UNICEF communications chief Linda Tom after a cargo delivery landed at Bangui Airport. USAID has contributed over US $7.5 million towards UNICEF’s emergency response in the Central African Republic since January 2014, including airlifts of critical supplies.
FUNDING
UNICEF’s response this year has been hampered by a severe funding shortfall, with detrimental impacts on UNICEF’s work. Earlier this year UNICEF appealed for US $81 million to provide emergency assistance to conflict-affected children in the Central African Republic, including education. As of December 5, only 47% of the required funding has been received. Internal UNICEF funding covered the most urgent gaps throughout the year and ensured that programs were able to achieve results for children.

However, the shortage of funds combined with insecurity hampered the delivery of emergency aid to the children most in need. As of November 2014, over 33,000 children were not vaccinated against measles, nearly 5,000 severely malnourished children under-five did not receive treatment, nearly 250,000 affected people did not have access to improved sources of water, nearly 40,000 children could not participate in temporary learning spaces, and only 2,143 children had been released from the armed groups out of the estimated 6,000 to 10,000 recruited.

Without sufficient funding, UNICEF will not be able to reach these hard-to-reach children. Any significant gap in assistance and in building capacities of communities would reverse the gains obtained in the past year. Funding is also critical to support neighbouring countries hosting refugees from the Central African Republic.
Number of children and people reached in 2014

### HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO HELP THE CHILDREN OF THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC?

- **For 65 cents** you can vaccinate a child against preventable diseases
- **For US$3** you can buy a mosquito net to protect a child against malaria
- **For US$10** you can educate a child for a month in a temporary learning space
- **For US$90** you can support a child released from an armed group for one month
Transforming basic services

What happens in 2015 will have a long-term impact on children. The reconstruction period presents opportunities to transform basic services and increase quality and participation. Together with our partners, UNICEF will play a leading role to:

- **Work with the Ministry of Health to set up a district health system**, contribute to the revitalisation of the central medical store and strengthen health management systems

- **Support the restoration of community-based health facilities** to screen for and address acute malnutrition

- **Scale up immunisation campaigns**, such as polio and measles and hygiene promotion

- **Improve access to sanitation and safe water** in urban and rural areas by introducing low cost high impact technology

- **Support a national back-to-school campaign** to boost school enrolments and attendance

- **Identify and release children associated with armed groups** and help them to rebuild normal lives

- **Establish community-based networks** that protect children

- **Re-build communities through peace dialogue** in diverse settings: schools, health centres, community meetings, radio shows

- **Spur greater investment in children through setting up cash transfers** to provide minimum income security and access to essential services.
The Road Ahead

One year after the crisis first made headlines, the international community cannot turn away from the humanitarian crisis in the Central African Republic. The country needs sustained international engagement and support.

**Protection of children, women and all civilians must be the highest priority.** Serious human rights abuses continue to be committed every day. Grave violations committed with impunity have to stop and perpetrators must be brought to justice. The UN peacekeeping mission is expected to improve security in 2015, but it has not yet reached its full capacity. Fostering reconciliation and peace will be key and UNICEF is well placed to support initiatives that address inter-communal mistrust.

**Now is not the time to scale down; it is time to improve the humanitarian response.** There have never been so many aid agencies in the country and UNICEF and partners have been able to considerably scale up interventions for children in need. Significant results have already been achieved. Any slowdown in assistance would reverse the gains made in the past year.

**We must invest in social services.** The re-building phase offers an opportunity to transform basic social services, including in health, education, water, sanitation and child protection. Basic infrastructure has been destroyed during the crisis and the international community must commit to re-building better systems than pre-crisis.

**Urgent attention is needed to stabilise and support the sub-region.** What happens in the Central African Republic is not an isolated crisis; it has had a significant spill-over effect in neighbouring countries and has a potential to further destabilise the sub-region and exacerbate the threat of terrorism. There is a critical lack of services for the families who have fled to neighbouring countries. Without funding for the sub-regional response, thousands of children will miss out on basic services.

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**2015 Provisional Funding Requirements**

- **Health** $14,000,000
- **Nutrition** $11,500,000
- **Child Protection** $10,000,000
- **Rapid Response Mechanism** $15,000,000
- **Water and sanitation** $11,400,000
- **Education** $4,700,000
- **HIV** $5,000,000
Special thanks

UNICEF’s work is possible through strong partnerships on the ground with government and non-governmental organizations, which have been central to ensuring the delivery of services and supplies.

UNICEF also acknowledges the tremendous efforts undertaken by voluntary organizations and people on the frontlines, who volunteer their time to improve the lives of children.

We extend our appreciation to the support provided by donors, including governments, UNICEF National Committees, the private sector and individuals who share our commitment to achieving change for children in the Central African Republic.

National Committees
Canadian UNICEF Committee
Czech Committee for UNICEF
Danish Committee for UNICEF
Finnish Committee for UNICEF
French Committee for UNICEF
German Committee for UNICEF
Hong Kong Committee for UNICEF
Italian Committee for UNICEF
Japanese Committee for UNICEF
Luxembourg Committee for UNICEF
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United Kingdom Committee for UNICEF
United States Fund for UNICEF

Governments
Andorra
Australia
Belgium
Canada/International Humanitarian Assistance
Finland
France
Greece
Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department for the European Commission (ECHO)
Italy
Japan
Malta
Norway
Republic of Korea
Switzerland
United Kingdom
United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

Others
The Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF)
The GAVI Fund
Global Partnership for Education
The Multi-Donor Trust Fund
World Bank