
FROM PLEDGE TO COMMITMENT

How should donors engage to reconstruct Central African Republic during the Brussels Conference?

Overview: Oxfam's position on the Brussels Conference for the Central African Republic

On 17 November 2016, donors will meet in Brussels to discuss reconstruction in Central African Republic (CAR). During this meeting, CAR authorities hope that international donors and partners will draw up commitments to help restore peace and security, renew the social contract and revive the economy. This policy note highlights the necessity of a long-term commitment to CAR as well as flexible funding. With the humanitarian crisis still ongoing, at the same time as early recovery, peace building and development needs are relevant in CAR; the international community must commit to funding in parallel short-, medium- and long-term interventions in a flexible and sustainable approach for the reconstruction of the country. A commitment to durable solutions for CAR must shape all efforts for the coming years.

1 BACKGROUND

CAR is facing a complex and volatile crisis. For the last three years, the number of people requiring protection and humanitarian assistance has been almost 50 percent of the population. As of the end of September 2016, 20 percent of the population of CAR remains displaced. This includes 384,884 internally displaced people, and nearly 467,960 refugees in neighbouring countries (UNHCR Regional Response Crisis, 30 September 2016). An estimated two million people are facing food insecurity and almost 65 percent of the population lack access to safe drinking water. Long-term exposure of communities to armed groups has exposed 60,000 women to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in 2015, that is almost 200 women survivors of SGBV per day, or 1 woman every 15 minutes. Because of the lack of funding in 2016, the collection and compilation of SGBV data has been done in only half of the country and has revealed that in six months, 5627 cases of gender-based violence has occurred – 86 percent of cases being against women.¹

After peaceful presidential and legislative elections earlier this year, the country has started to regain stability in regions where peacekeepers and humanitarian assistance have supported the process. However, a large part of the territory remains under the control of armed groups, who are still perpetrating violence against civilians. Recently a new wave of violence in the capital and the north has rapidly aggravated the security situation, highlighting the need to urgently implement crucial peace building programmes in CAR.

CAR cannot face yet another year in which the humanitarian appeal is underfunded, with only 31 percent of funds acquired three months before the end of the year. The people of Central African Republic have urgent needs for assistance which are not being met, even though a current cholera outbreak has affected almost 300 people and killed 28 of them.

The absence of humanitarian and development donors in the country, able to monitor the situation, results in underfunding of the assistance and inconsistency between emergency and long-term support. Because funding is provided only during upsurges of violence, it is difficult to give the continuous support needed to stabilize the country and impact peoples' lives.

2 FLEXIBLE AND LONG-TERM FUNDING FOR CAR

1. Donors must commit to a new engagement with CAR where previous commitments and funding have lacked sustainability and consistency. In the last five years, four donor meetings have been held in Brussels to support CAR humanitarian and development plans.² Unfortunately, the pledges have rarely been met and the country continues to relapse into new crises.³ Few donors⁴ are present in CAR and most of them maintain very distant and limited support for the country. At the same time as this inconsistent approach to funding, the country has suffered the worst crisis in its history. The time has come for donors to commit to CAR in the long term, as well as opening long-term offices in the country to establish lasting partnerships.

2. Given the complexity of the CAR crisis, funding for the response must be flexible and diversified, aligning the multi-year and flexible Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) with early recovery and long-term development plans. This gives donors the opportunity to provide funding for both humanitarian activities and development needs, depending on the reality on the ground and on the diverse situations of the different regions in the country. The international community must also ensure that ongoing humanitarian action promotes social cohesion and actively works to address underlying drivers of conflict which triggered initial displacement. To achieve that, donors should focus on increasing financial and political support for restoration of state authority, good governance, peace, justice and reconciliation and humanitarian assistance to continue responding to new waves of displacement, address protracted needs, ensure voluntary and principled return, and allow for reconstruction and rehabilitation.

3. Support for the CAR response must be allocated on the basis of needs and efforts must continue to expand humanitarian access to harder-to-reach areas. Populations across CAR are affected by the current crisis at varying levels and some feel that they have been abandoned by the international community during the last decades. Given the sensitive political context and the need to support social cohesion and reconciliation, and address underlying causes of the conflict, the most vulnerable populations, mainly victims of SGBV, children, internal displaced persons and refugees, must be prioritized in the areas where we can reach them. Continued efforts must be made to expand into areas which are harder to reach out of Bangui; given that in CAR chronic long-term crises exacerbate people's vulnerability to humanitarian crisis.

4. In line with commitments made by the international community at the World Humanitarian Summit, donors must increase support to local and national humanitarian actors and community-based organizations to enhance their resilience capacity in a context of repeated unrest and localized crises. This includes enabling stronger local leadership in the humanitarian and recovery response by engaging CAR civil society and government in the coordination and implementation of the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) and CAR 5 year Recovery and Peacebuilding plan (RCPC). By doing so, the international community will demonstrate its own commitment to channel at least 25 percent of its funds to local organizations as agreed in the Grand Bargain.⁵

3 ADDRESSING PROTECTION CONCERNS

5. The Government of CAR has a duty to protect people within its borders from conflict and violence. Despite its good intentions, the current government has neither been able to redeploy its administration and security forces across the territory nor implement disarmament, justice, and national reconciliation strategies. These important programmes have been pending since 2013 and have all been delayed due to lack of funds. Significant improvements in protection cannot be achieved if the perpetrators of insecurity are not disarmed, justice implemented and communities reconciled. **Donors are recommended to fully and sustainably fund the Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration and Repatriation (DDRR) programmes, justice and security sector reform, as well as reconciliation programmes and programmes to fight impunity. The current fragility of the state makes the integration of traditional and local initiatives essential to all of these processes.**

6. Women and girls in CAR face increased risk of SGBV perpetrated by various actors. Testimonies of SGBV survivors have shown a high level of exposure to HIV/AIDS during violence and a lack of access to healthcare, psychosocial and socioeconomic support. Prioritization of interventions that protect women's rights, promote their leadership in the midst of crises and provide support which meets the unique needs of women and girls is urgently needed. Responsibilities regarding food security, economic recovery, access to water, household duties as well as protection fall heavily on women in CAR society, and yet they are still the most vulnerable. **Increased support for women and girls' programming is required to bolster local leadership in the humanitarian and peace building response to implement Women Peace and Security in CAR according to Security Council resolution 1325.**

4 DURABLE SOLUTIONS FOR INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE AND REFUGEES IN CAR

7. CAR has a long history of displacement, and given current tensions, the risk of displacement remains high. Efforts must be taken to ensure a principled response to returns within a national legal and operational framework for durable solutions. The Government of CAR should first adopt a law domesticating the Kampala Convention for the Protection of IDPs in its legal system. Secondly, in partnership with humanitarian and development actors and civil society, the government should explore durable solutions for people who may choose to relocate or resettle, identify feasible options and inform displaced people about them. To achieve this, donors must provide funds to rebuild destroyed houses and livelihoods, to restore identity documents, basic services, the return of civil administration and adequate guarantees of safety and security.

The November conference is a unique opportunity to foster long-lasting recovery in CAR. The engagement of donors beyond traditional unmet pledges will reduce the likelihood of the country relapsing into new crises. The country, which is placed 187 out of 188 countries on the Human Development Index, will be able to start a new chapter in its history if donors commit to fund the HRP and the RCPC in the long term, open long-term offices in the country, and provide flexible funds.

NOTES

- 1 CAR Gender Based Violence Sub-Cluster, Résultats de collecte de données dans le cadre du système de gestion de l'information sur les VBG (GBVIMS), Période de collecte de données :Janvier – Juin 2016
https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/system/files/documents/files/ppt_situation_vbg_gbvims_janv-juin_2016_0.pdf
- 2 Between 2011 and 2016, four donor conferences were organized in support of CAR and none of them have mobilized enough background to meet the needs identified by humanitarian and development actors. Long before, in 2007, the announcements made by development partners at the round table held in Brussels resulted in lower commitments to expectations, since only 26% of commitments were honoured.
- 3 Donors have pledged a total of US\$400m in 2011 to fund the second plan for the reduction of poverty from 2011 to 2015 but because of the conflict in 2012 the fund has not been disbursed (<http://centrafrique-presse.over-blog.com/article-table-ronde-de-bruxelles-ngouandjika-convertit-l-humiliation-en-promesse-de-400-milliards-de-f-cf-77136132.html>). A seizure of power by the Seleka in 2012. This plan was replaced by the National Program for Sustainable Recovery 2013–2015, which was not funded (cf. <http://info-centrafrique.over-blog.com/du-dsrp-ii-au-pnrd--pour-quel-r%C3%89sultat>). In 2015 only 53% of the \$613m required for humanitarian response plan were funded (<https://fts.unocha.org/pageloader.aspx?page=emerg-emergencyDetails&appealID=1071>), and in 2014 to \$548m necessary 58% were covered.
- 4 European Union, United Nations, USAID and French Development Agency are the only development donors present in the country. While only ECHO and the UN Emergency Funds instruments (CHF, CERF) are permanent donors in CAR. Other humanitarian donors like Germany, UK, Ireland, Canada, Italy, Belgium or Switzerland support the country from abroad.
- 5 The Grand Bargain is a recognition that humanitarian solutions can start and end with local communities supported by local organizations.

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For further information on the issues raised in this paper please email advocacy@oxfaminternational.org

Published by Oxfam GB for Oxfam International under ISBN 978-0-85598-833-3 in November 2016.

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