

**FY14 Q2 Report: January - March 2014**



Community Counselor speaks about GBV at a sensitization in Bangassou (Photo taken by Olga, Mercy Corps)

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**The Southeast Economic Recovery and Protection Project (SERAP)**

Funded by USAID / Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA)

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## 1. Executive Summary

The Southeast Economic Recovery and Protection Project (SERAP) began in June 2013 to respond to the mounting protection and relief needs of conflict-affected communities in Southeastern Central African Republic (CAR). The goal of the program is to increase food security, enhance community resilience and strengthen the protective environment via community-based mechanisms for children, women and men affected by conflict in the Mbomou prefecture, including survivors, escapees, and host communities.

During the reporting period, the project achieved the following:

- Thirty-six resilience groups received training on literacy, life skills and financial literacy. Some groups also received vocational training or Village Savings and Loan (VSLA) training.
- Village leaders received training on Gender Based Violence (GBV) and the importance of medical and psychosocial referrals especially in the case of child rape.
- Agricultural groups were given land for farming and received training on division of parcels and farming techniques.
- Continued play therapy groups/clubs throughout Bangassou and Rafai, for a total of 36 groups with 30 children each.
- Thirty-six play therapy micro-project proposals were submitted, approved and procurement began. Ongoing mobilization of 41 protection committees and other community networks for effective protection monitoring and community sensitization on GBV.
- The two Listening Centers, handled 88 cases, 23 of which were children.

## 2. Program Overview

SERAP was designed to respond to the mounting protection and relief needs of conflict-affected communities in southeastern CAR. Mbomou Prefecture has been particularly affected, following the repeated civil conflict and attacks by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) that have persisted in 2012 as well as new conflict caused by the Séléka rebel coalition. Mercy Corps has built upon the foundation of past successful protection programs in Rafai, Bangassou and surrounding areas, providing much-needed assistance in the areas of psychosocial support, GBV prevention and response, health, and economic support to internally displaced persons (IDPs). This program enables Mercy Corps to provide urgently needed support to LRA conflict-affected survivors through interventions in child protection, agriculture, food security, and socio-economic support, as well as humanitarian coordination and information management. It also enables Mercy Corps to continue to build the capacity of local organizations to respond to protection needs.

Expected Results:

- 33,381 vulnerable people, including 3,000 IDPs in LRA-affected communities will continue to have access to protection services, including prevention and response to GBV;
- 3,500 vulnerable people, including 2,000 IDPs in LRA-affected communities will have restored assets in order to promote livelihoods and economic recovery;
- 2,000 vulnerable people, including 1,250 IDPs in LRA-affected communities will have improved agriculture livelihoods and income generation opportunities;

- Surveillance information will be collected to provide timely and rigorous early warning and vulnerability information on emerging and evolving crises situations for 93,457 people living in the Mbomou prefecture, including 10,000 IDPs.

### 3. Security

Security throughout the southeast region continued to improve during this reporting period. In March, the Séléka attempted to return to Bangassou, but were stopped at the edge of town by the African-led International Support Mission to Central Africa (MISCA) and forced to return north. There have also been reports of armed groups moving along the axes between Zemio and Rafai and Rafai and Bangassou, making travel along these routes inadvisable. A MISCA mission was sent to Rafai during the month of March to begin the installation of forces in Rafai, which should improve the situation along the axes. This, in combination with the installation of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA) in the region, should further contribute to increased security in the region. Because of this, Mercy Corps expects to be able to increase the radius of travel along the axes in the next reporting period. Despite the relative security in the area, programs continue to be affected by the conflict in Bangui and along the routes out of Bangui, mainly due to the inability to procure materials in the southeast. The majority of materials must be purchased and sent from Bangui.

### 4. Performance Summary

#### Award-level Beneficiaries

Cumulative Period Targeted		Reporting Period Reached		Cumulative Period Reached	
Total	IDP	Total	IDP	Total	IDP
93,457	10,000	24,056	1,391	43,884	6,003

#### Progress to Date

<b>SECTOR #1 PROTECTION</b>	<i>Objective:</i> LRA-affected populations have continued access to protection services				
Geographic Area (s)	Mbomou Prefecture in Southeastern CAR, with particular focus in the towns of Rafai, Agoumar, Selim, Dembia, Geurikindo and surrounding villages				
Beneficiaries Targeted	Total: 15,000		IDP: 3,000		
Beneficiaries Reached (Reporting Period)	Total: 24,056		IDP: 1,391		
Beneficiaries Reached (Cumulative)	Total: 43,992		IDP: 2,786 (includes 863 not previously reported)		
Subsector: Child Protection					
<b>INDICATORS</b>	<b>Disaggregated</b>	<b>Applicable</b>	<b>Cumulative Value Targeted</b>	<b>Reporting Period Reached</b>	<b>Cumulative Reached</b>
Number of people trained in child protection, disaggregated by sex	Male	Yes	5662	3640	12,529
	Female	Yes	8493	4078	13,458
	Other	Yes	NA	NA	NA
Percentage of targeted	Boys	Yes	75%	0*	NA*

children reporting an improvement in their sense of safety and well-being at program close, disaggregated by sex.	Girls	Yes	75%	0*	NA*
	Other	Yes	NA	NA	NA

Subsector: Prevention and Response to Gender-Based Violence

INDICATORS	Disaggregated	Applicable	Cumulative Value Targeted	Reporting Period Reached	Cumulative Reached
Number of individuals benefitting from GBV services, by sex	Male	Yes	3500	7509	12780
	Female	Yes	3500	8759	16541
	Other	Yes	NA	NA	NA
Number of people trained in GBV prevention or response, by sex	Male	Yes	20	49	107
	Female	Yes	15	2	36
	Other	Yes	NA	NA	NA

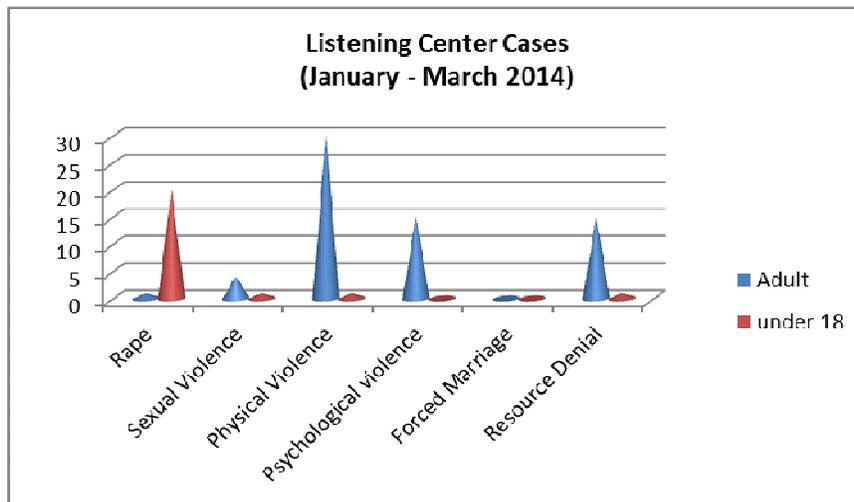
Subsector: Psychosocial Support Services

INDICATORS	Disaggregated	Applicable	Cumulative Value Targeted	Reporting Period Reached	Cumulative Reached
Number of people trained in psychosocial support services, by sex	Male	Yes	0	0	0
	Female	Yes	21	19	40
	Other	Yes	NA	NA	NA

**\*This indicator will be measured at the close of the program**

**Gender Based Violence Prevention and Response**

The listening centers in Rafai and Bangassou continued to operate, and psychosocial agents received cases of GBV. In this reporting period, the following types of GBV were received:



Across both of our southeast offices, Mercy Corps has witnessed a spike in the incidents of child rape (aged 4-14). Mercy Corps had been hearing that it was becoming more frequent in the peripheral areas of both Bangassou and Rafai, and that often parents were taking their children to the traditional justice systems for resolution; this usually resulted in an exchange of money and nothing further. Mercy Corps put an emphasis in this reporting period on

educating the local leadership, who make up the traditional justice system, on the incidents and consequences of child rape and on the referral system and the importance of seeking medical attention. Mercy Corps held a training in March for 56 village chiefs (of which one is female). Themes covered were gender based violence, child rights, the referral system, the 72-hour delay, and the importance of seeking psychosocial and medical assistance, especially concerning child victims of rape.

Parents were also hesitant to bring girls to the center due to lack of transportation. Many of these survivors live in the peripheral areas of Bangassou and Rafai and have traveled up to 60km to receive attention. Mercy Corps made the decision to cover a certain amount of transportation costs in order to ensure the proper care of these survivors. It is likely that these two changes have had significant impact on reporting, but does not necessarily indicate a rise in the actual incidence of the rape of minors. It is also likely that there are many more cases of women over the age of 18, but who do not come forward.

During this reporting period the two listening centers have also both provided support for several LRA survivors who have come out of the bush after several months to several years of captivity. There were 88 cases reported in the two listening centers, with children comprising 23 cases.

Community counselors and protection committees continued to educate the public on the realities and consequences of gender based violence, child protection, human rights, the dangers of HIV/AIDS, reproductive health, and gender equity.

Community Counselor Sensitization Impact				
Women	Men	Girls	Boys	Total
5124	4472	3632	3037	<b>16,265</b>

**Child Protection**

Play therapy groups continue to meet twice weekly to play volleyball or soccer and to learn more about peace building and conflict mitigation among peers. There are 36 play therapy groups with 30 children in each group.



Play Therapy Session, Rafai, February 2014

During this reporting period, play therapy groups submitted proposals for 36 micro-projects. The aim of the micro-projects is for the play therapy groups to come up with an idea for a project that will be fun, build team cohesion, and contribute to social and community development. The types of projects submitted by the play therapy groups were football fields, volleyball and basketball courts, libraries, latrines and cinemas/cultural centers. In the cases of the libraries and cultural centers, the groups were asked to choose a location, like a school or local church, where rooms could be set-up and improved. After proposal submissions, budgets were created and materials purchased. The budget formation and purchasing of materials has taken longer than anticipated due to fluctuations in the market. For example, the price of cement has increased significantly over the last several months, forcing us to redo budgets multiple times. There is also limited availability in the local markets in Bangassou and Rafai, forcing us to purchase many items in Bangui and the ship to the locations. With continued security restraints along the axes this has increased the expected time. The micro-projects will be constructed during the next reporting period.

<b>SECTOR #2</b>					
<b>Economic Recovery and Market Systems</b>		<i>Objective:</i> Livelihood assets of LRA-affected IDP and host households are restored in order to meet household needs			
Geographic Area (s)		Mbomou Prefecture in Southeastern CAR, with particular focus in Bangassou town			
Beneficiaries Targeted		Total: 3,500	IDP: 2,000		
Beneficiaries Reached (Reporting Period)		Total: 0	IDP: 0		
Beneficiaries Reached (Cumulative)		Total: 3520	IDP: 2112		
Subsector: Livelihoods Restoration					
<b>INDICATORS</b>	<b>Disaggregated</b>	<b>Applicable</b>	<b>Cumulative Value Targeted</b>	<b>Reporting Period Reached</b>	<b>Cumulative Period Reached</b>
Number of people assisted through livelihood restoration activities, by sex	Male	Yes	1470	244	1489
	Female	Yes	2030	475	2505
	Other	NA	NA	NA	NA
Percent of beneficiaries reporting their livelihoods restored within three to six months after receiving support	N/A	Yes	75%	75	75%
Total USD amount channeled into the program area through livelihoods restoration activities	N/A	Yes	\$19.6 /beneficiary (\$68,600 total)	0	\$67,837
Subsector: Microfinance					
<b>INDICATORS</b>	<b>Disaggregated</b>	<b>Applicable</b>	<b>Cumulative Value Targeted</b>	<b>Reporting Period Reached</b>	<b>Cumulative Period Reached</b>
Number of people, by sex, or MSEs newly receiving financial services or continuing to receive financial services due to USAID/OFDA support	Male	Yes	189	0	189
	Female	Yes	261	0	261
	Other	NA	NA	NA	NA

Percentage of financial service accounts/groups supported by USAID/OFDA that are functioning properly	N/A	Yes	75% of groups	0	0
Total USD amount channeled into the program area through sub-sector activities	N/A	Yes	\$2,160	0	0

**Resilience groups progress:**

In the reporting period, thirty-six resilience groups have been created in Rafai and Bangassou, for a total of 719 participants. On average, each group has 20 members, with about 25-30 per women’s groups, who were selected in the same community and expressed the goal of building their resilience. There are 19 groups in Bangassou and 15 in Rafai, with the following breakdown:

Location	Women’s groups	Men’s groups	Youth groups
Bangassou	6	6	7
Rafai	5	3	7

All of these groups went through resilience training. In addition, group specific trainings were organized based on the specific needs of each group (see below). Men’s and women’s groups received training on Income Generating Activities (IGA) and Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA); while youth received specific vocational trainings. Below is the summary of topics detailed during the resilience curriculum trainings:

Literacy and life skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Overview of the Resilience group</li> <li>- Gender and empowerment</li> <li>- Leading Healthy Lives</li> <li>- Reproductive Health and Family Planning</li> <li>- Family and community safety</li> </ul>	Each topic was divided into two or three sessions over a period of week (each session was 2 hours long).
Financial Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Resilience, Community and Value</li> <li>- Community and Empowerment</li> <li>- Village Resources</li> <li>- Developing Resources</li> <li>- Learning to keep Records</li> </ul>	
Literacy and life skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conflict and Communication</li> <li>- Rights Resolution and Peace</li> <li>- Reflections ; positive visualization silent</li> </ul>	
Financial Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Communication in our village economy</li> <li>- Saving our money</li> <li>- Investing in ourselves and our future</li> </ul>	

Resilience Group members participated in a two month training (16 sessions) to cover all the resilience modules. Trainings started in January 2014 in Bangassou and Rafai town and reached a total of 719 participants. All participants benefited from the cash transfer program, and later became resilience group members. Approximately \$97 was given to each beneficiary (total \$67,837), and approximately ¾ of beneficiaries used the money to buy seeds and for basic commercial activities. The remainder used the money to pay medical bills and buy food.

All trainings were facilitated by 72 focal points trained by three Mercy Corps trainers. Each resilience group has a peer educator (focal point) and his/her assistant. The average attendance at resilience trainings was 94% for children, 98% for women, and 90% for men. Women demonstrated strong interest and expressed that the training topics were appropriate, particularly topics related to gender strengthening, rights resolution and peace, reproductive health, capacity building and village resources. This may account for why women had a slightly better attendance rate.

Men’s and women’s resilience groups members who followed IGA trainings were integrated and converted into VSLA groups. To date, all resilience groups meet regularly to conduct savings and loans activities. Each group, with technical assistance from program staff, will establish a constitution to put in place norms and policies reducing the risk of fraud and increasing transparency. As new groups, they will also need close monitoring and capacity building so that to encourage a full operational structure. Two months after trainings conducted throughout May and June 2014, Mercy Corps will be able to estimate how many Resilience Groups are properly functioning.



In addition to their general resilience training, youth resilience group members participated in a one-month vocational training on sewing, furniture-making, and masonry. All participants selected the appropriate trainers and the vocational activities they wished to pursue

<b>SECTOR #3 Agriculture and Food Security</b>		<i>Objective:</i> Agricultural livelihoods and income generation opportunities are strengthened for LRA-affected IDP and host households			
Geographic Area (s)		Mbomou Prefecture in Southeastern CAR, with particular focus in Bangassou town			
Beneficiaries Targeted		Total: 2,000	IDP: 1,250		
Beneficiaries Reached (Reporting Period)		Total: 0	IDP: 0		
Beneficiaries Reached (Cumulative)		Total: 2000	IDP: 2000		
Subsector: Improving Agricultural Production/Food Security					
INDICATORS	Disaggregated	Applicable	Cumulative Value Targeted	Reporting Period Reached	Cumulative Period Reached
Number of people benefiting from seed systems/agricultural input activities, by sex.	Male	Yes	1160	0	1160
	Female	Yes	840	0	840
	Other	Yes	NA	NA	NA
Projected increase in the number of months of food self-sufficiency due to seed system activities/ agricultural input for beneficiary households.	N/A	Yes	2 months	To be measured at the end of the project	0

Agriculture activities were partially completed in the previous reporting period. The distribution of agricultural kits was scheduled for January but had to be postponed due to the insecurity in Bangui, where tools were being procured.

Training continued for the 26 farmer groups on agricultural techniques for the planting and harvest of peanuts, corn, rice, zucchini, and cassava. Eight hectares of land were given to the farmer groups by the Bangassou municipality to begin farming.. The regional director of agriculture was sent to the eight hectare piece of land to divide into equal parts for the 420 IDP farmers. Farmers were also trained in measurement and division of property.

<b>SECTOR #4 Humanitarian Coordination and Information Management</b>		<i>Objective:</i> Monthly surveillance data is collected to contribute to the national Early Warning System			
Geographic Area (s)		Mbomou Prefecture in Southeastern CAR			
Beneficiaries Targeted		Total: 93,457	IDP: 10,000		
Beneficiaries Reached (Reporting Period)		Total: 0	IDP: 0 <sup>1</sup>		
Beneficiaries Reached (Cumulative)		Total: <b>2000</b>	IDP: <b>2000</b>		
Subsector: Information Management					
INDICATORS	Disaggregated	Applicable	Cumulative Value Targeted	Reporting Period Reached	Cumulative Period Reached
Number and percentage of humanitarian organizations utilizing information management services	N/A	Yes	24	8	0
Number and percentage of humanitarian organizations directly contributing to information products	N/A	Yes	7	1	8
Number of products made available by information management services that are accessed by clients	N/A	Yes	12	1	45

The program team submitted the bi-weekly collected data collected in Rafai and Bangassou markets via online based database (ODK) to Action Against Hunger (AAH). However the monthly surveillance bulletin was not produced because some partners (ICRC, Acted, WFP, IRC, Solidarités, Central African Red Cross, PU-Ami) were not able to collect and submit. The only one produced bulletin covered only the markets of Bangui. However, humanitarian information is regularly shared with direct and indirect project's beneficiaries in the operational areas.

<sup>1</sup> The beneficiaries of this sector should be all beneficiaries of the other sectors of the project, as they all benefit from the Early Warning System that is put in place by our partners. Unfortunately, no bulletin having been provided for our region, we don't know the impact it has had over the period.

## **5. Monitoring & Evaluation**

Program staff members continue to use the GBVIMS to collect data on gender based violence cases seen in the listening center. The remaining monitoring and evaluation activities will be conducted next quarter because this quarter focused on distribution of some agricultural tools and resilience activities. The team will follow up with beneficiaries next quarter to measure use, relevance, and function.

## **6. Coordination**

Mercy Corps participates in regular coordination meetings in Bangassou with all the other partners in the area, including Merlin/Save the Children, Acted and Coheb, in order to coordinate information and activities and share important security related information. In addition, Mercy Corps is a member of the South-East coordination mechanism led by OCHA held in Bangui to coordinate among all actors in the Mbomou and Haut-Mbomou regions. Finally, Mercy Corps shares key information on the program activities and security in the South East at Protection Cluster meetings, GBV and Child Protection sub-cluster meetings and Food security Meetings held on a bi-monthly basis in Bangui.

## **7. Conclusion and Upcoming Activities**

After the slow beginning of the project due to the security situation in the southeast, the reporting period has seen both the implementation and conclusion of many project activities. Even with the restricted movement along the axes, Mercy Corps has been able to continue programs around the peripheral areas through the help and participation of our protection committees, community counselors and other partners in the community. With the continued stability in the region, Mercy Corps will continue to closely monitor the security situation and if deemed safe, will extend activities to rural axes.

The next quarter will be focused on the following activities:

1. The continuation of play therapy activities in Bangassou, Rafai and surrounding areas
2. Continuation of the Listening Center's activities and providing psychosocial support of LRA and GBV affected survivors
3. Training for health care professionals on GBV and referral pathway
4. Procurement and distribution of agricultural tools
5. Early Warning Surveillance System activities
6. Implementation of Play therapy club micro-projects
7. Program Final Evaluation