

FY14 Q4 Report: July - September 2014



Play therapy football teams benefiting from project sports fields in Bangassou

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The Southeast Economic Recovery and Protection Project (SERAP)

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

COUNTRY CONTACT	HEADQUARTERS CONTACT	PROJECT SUMMARY
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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:

- Twice weekly play therapy groups/clubs continued until August in Bangassou and Rafai, with a total of 36 groups and 30 children per group.
- 18 play therapy clubs in Rafai received sports kits including soccer balls, pumps and a total of 480 jerseys. A play therapy tournament was organized in both Bangassou and Rafai in July with all 720 play therapy members in Bangassou and Rafai participating.
- Given the ongoing conflict and subsequent human rights abuses in CAR, sensitization to human rights standards especially at risk continued.
- The two Listening Centers responded to 130 cases throughout the reporting period, 37 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 and other vulnerable communities 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 other 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.

In September 2014 Mercy Corps signed a modification of assistance award agreement prolonging the Southeast Economic Recovery and Protection Project activities until

September 2015. While the objectives and thrust will remain largely the same, the below report will also reference expected shifts in activity or beneficiary focus.

3. Security

The security situation in Mbomou prefecture continues to remain more stable than in other parts of the country. As of September 15, 2014 the African Union peacekeeping mission (MISCA) transitioned into the international, United Nations peacekeeping mission, MINUSCA (United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic). There is a MINUSCA presence in both Bangassou and Rafai, and neither town currently has a Séléka or Anti-Balaka presence. If the Mbomou security situation remains stable, Mercy Corps hopes to soon revisit the internal 5 km radius restriction for movement around Bangassou and Rafai.

The security situation in Bangui still remains tense and uncertain which has also had an impact on flight schedules to the southeast, restricting Mercy Corps ability to move staff and resources into the field. While the Mbomou prefecture remains calm for the moment, the fluid and rapid nature of the country's changing security conditions underscores the necessity to be prepared for any sudden developments to security in both Bangassou and Rafai. Comprehensive security assessments in both Bangassou and Rafai were therefore undertaken in August. An updated security plan for the southeast was created and circulated amongst Mercy Corps staff.

Criminal and militia activity on the roads between Bangui and Bangassou poses mounting significant logistical and security problems. Many items needed to implement activities - e.g. fuel, construction materials for rehabilitation of the listening center or for reparations of the Mercy Corps offices, etc. – arrive via road transportation. In September 2014 a clearly marked NGO truck traveling to deliver materials on the road to Bangassou, was attacked and pillaged in a nearby prefecture. Given the travelling distances required for items to arrive in both Bangassou and Rafai, Mercy Corps continues to prioritize convoy travel with other NGO trucks. Such logistical and security concerns, however, have delayed the delivery of crucial materials and the functioning of our programs, especially in Rafai. Given the improved security situation and the August security assessment, Mercy Corps established a 5 kilometers movement restriction in Bangassou, but it will soon be revisited while the 5 kilometer perimeter in Rafai is expected to remain in effect.

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	25,251	1,768	90,118	10,705

Progress to Date

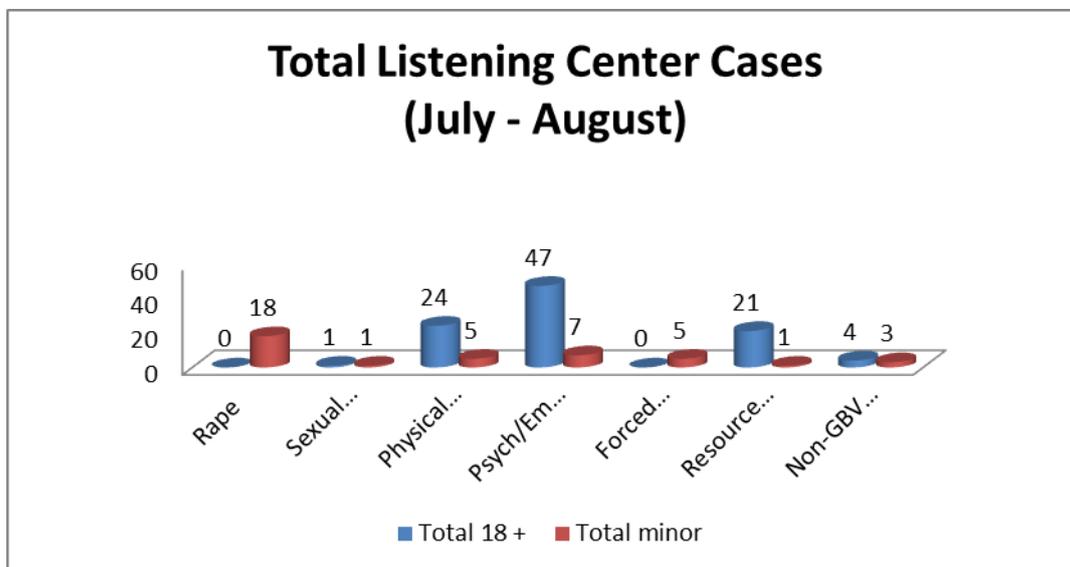
SECTOR #1		<i>Objective:</i> LRA-affected populations have continued access to protection services			
PROTECTION					
Geographic Area (s)		Mbomou Prefecture in Southeastern CAR, with particular focus in the towns of Rafai, Agoumar, Selim, Dembia, Geurekindo and surrounding villages			
Beneficiaries Targeted		Total: 33,381		IDP: 5,500	
Beneficiaries Reached (Reporting Period)		Total: 25,251		IDP: 1,768	
Beneficiaries Reached (Cumulative)		Total: 87,567		IDP: 6,449	
Subsector: Child Protection					
INDICATORS	Disaggregated	Applicable	Cumulative Value Targeted	Reporting Period Reached	Cumulative Reached
Number of people trained in child protection, disaggregated by sex	Male	Yes	5,662	2,581	18,397
	Female	Yes	8,493	2,877	19,613
	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	3,500	8,912	27,861
	Female	Yes	3,500	10,908	35,698
	Other	Yes	NA	NA	NA
Number of people trained in GBV prevention or response, by sex	Male	Yes	20	0	107
	Female	Yes	15	0	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	0	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 received 130 GBV cases during this reporting period. Cases were given psychosocial support and medical referrals as needed. In this reporting period, the following types of GBV were received:



As seen by the above chart, psychological/emotional abuse cases remain the most prevalent forms of GBV recorded by psychosocial agents in the Mercy Corps listening centers. Many of these cases, as well as the cases of physical violence, take place between family members and often between intimate partners. Sadly, all of the 18 recorded rape cases in the Mbomou prefecture targeted minors. The Mercy Corps child protection committee work and community sensitizations therefore remain as vitally important as ever. While the majority of the 130 GBV cases recorded in the reporting period targeted women and girls, it is also significant that 21 cases, or 16%, also noted men and boys as survivors of gender based violence. Psychosocial agents and Mercy Corps programming continues to ensure a gender neutral approach to GBV survivors. In the next reporting period, due to an increase in listening center resources via various donors, Mercy Corps also plans to recruit male psychosocial agents.

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, gender equity, the role of the listening center and its referral system. Our informal partnerships – elaborated below - with community medical

service providers allowed community counselors and protection committee members to communicate more complete service provision information to the local populations. Given that a significant component of protection and GBV case management often includes medical care, Mercy Corps is also currently strengthening informal partnerships with medical service providers in Bangassou and Rafai. This way we ensure that protection and GBV related information during our protection and GBV sensitizations in the community is paired with medical service provision information (e.g. the type of medical care, and costs, currently assured by local medical service providers).

In that vein, MSF-Belgium's public health outreach team in Bangassou gave a one-hour presentation on basic public health information and the services provided at the MSF supported regional hospital in Bangassou at Mercy Corp's September protection committee meeting. Mercy Corps has also informally partnered with Cordaid, who runs 7 community health centers, in Bangassou and has been asked to present on GBV awareness and Mercy Corps service provision at Cordaid's upcoming 3 day public health training of trainers in early October. In the next reporting period Mercy Corps in Bangassou and Rafai plan to more formally establish our relationship with local medical service providers via memorandums of understanding.

In July, Mercy Corps trained 20 medical service providers in Rafai – 13 women and 7 men. The 3 day training was carried out by 2 community health workers from the Mbomou prefecture who had previously received Mercy Corps clinical care training. However, in Rafai medical services are deteriorating rapidly due Save the Children's departure in July from supporting the local hospital and health centers.

Mercy Corps continues to hold monthly protection coordination meetings with community counselors and protection committee focal points. The purpose of these meetings is to better coordinate activities within the community, seek feedback about protection issues in the community and to trouble shoot any issues encountered in the field. Through these coordination meetings, Mercy Corps is able to better plan activities that meet the needs of the communities. The meetings are well-attended and traditionally last half a day with some counselors/focal points traveling from up to 35 kilometers away to attend. Community counselors continued to undertake weekly community sensitizations to raise awareness on GBV related issues ultimately reaching nearly 20,000 individuals.

Community Counselor Sensitization Impact July - Sept 2014				
Women	Men	Girls	Boys	Total
6,536	4,965	4,372	3,947	19,820

A very weak justice system, an issue in across the Central African Republic, but one that is especially pronounced in the southeast due to the rural, sparsely populated and remote nature of the prefectures, can sometimes lead community members to depend upon alternative/tribal law enforcement mechanisms. There are no judges, no courts and no functioning prisons in Mbomou prefecture. These alternative justice systems are often called upon to mediate - via local community leaders - both criminal and non-criminal matters such as rape, theft and family disagreements. Mercy Corps is cognizant of such a tendency and is careful to ensure that the Listening Centers, and the option of reconciliation services for non-criminal matters, are not seen as an alternative justice mechanism as the official municipal and federal justice systems which, for the moment, remain nearly nonexistent in the Mbomou prefecture

Child Protection

During this reporting period, Mercy Corps trained 70 community leaders in Rafai on child protection issues. In Bangassou, over 80 child protection committee members received a three day training on child protection issues, mediation and key sensitization points to include in the bi-monthly community sensitizations that protection committee members are meant to undertake. Unlike the community counselors, protection committee members are unpaid and therefore only undertake half as many community sensitizations per month as the community counselors. To complement the community sensitizations undertaken by community counselors, protection committee members focus on child rights in their community outreach activities.

During this reporting period, the 40 protection committees (with an average of 4 members per committee) were ultimately able to sensitize ~5,500 community members on child protection issues in Bangassou and Rafai via 1-2 hour presentations twice a month to community members. Often times protection committee members will advertise a time and place that a sensitization will take place in a community ahead of time so as to ensure a varied audience. Additionally, dance and theater sketches are sometimes incorporated into the ongoing community awareness-raising campaign.

Protection Comm. Sensitization Impact July - Sept 2014				
Women	Men	Girls	Boys	Total
1,745	1,562	1,132	1,019	5,458

Play Therapy

The ongoing and tense security situation in the southeast at the beginning of this reporting period continued to pose logistical and operational challenges and activities such as the finalization of the play therapy micro-projects and the play therapy group leader meetings therefore proceeded with a slight delay. In Rafai, sports kits for all 18 clubs were distributed which included soccer balls, pumps and 480 jerseys. In both Bangassou and Rafai play therapy group leader meetings were held. Soccer tournaments were also organized in both Bangassou and Rafai with all 720 play therapy members participating. As approximately half of play therapy members are girls, the tournament finals showcased both two girl teams and two boy teams competing against each other.



Play therapy soccer tournaments, Bangassou July 2014

There are 36 play therapy groups in both Bangassou and Rafai with 30 children in each group. Play therapy groups were formed for members to create safe environments for conflict-affected children and youth to play, learn, socialize, build skills, and establish relationships with trained community mentors based on respect and trust. The play therapy activities use volleyball or soccer, among other sports and play activities, to learn more about peace building and conflict mitigation among their peers and facilitate their healing process by alleviating the effects of the conflict, and help reintegrate children and youth. In the last reporting period all of the play therapy groups submitted their ideas and budgets for proposed micro-projects. However, due to the tenuous security situation in the third quarter which posed significant logistical and programmatic hurdles, the implementation of play therapy micro-projects was only finalized in this last quarter.

Each approved play therapy micro-project received 1 million CFA (about \$2,000) budget to carry out activities to improve community living. Once approved, all logistics and material transportation and construction was undertaken by Mercy Corps. Approved play therapy micro-projects included the building of soccer fields involving the construction of soccer goals and nets, the creation and/or rehabilitation of community libraries, building a new water point in Rafai, constructing latrines in a Bangassou school. Mercy Corps in Bangassou and Rafai have received quite a bit of positive community feedback with an appetite for further projects to be absorbed into the community.

Of note, the protection activities for the reporting periods up until Q4 included a focus on LRA affected populations. The September 2014 modification of assistance of award has slightly shifted expected beneficiaries for the reporting periods of Q5 and onwards to a more general target population of “survivors of violence, abduction and/or displacement”. Identification and referral services, including psychosocial support via the two listening centers will continue. Mercy Corps will likewise continue community awareness raising campaigns on child rights and GBV issues via the child protection committees and community counselors.

SECTOR #2					
Economic Recovery and Market Systems		<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: 3,520	IDP: 2,112		
Subsector: Livelihoods Restoration					
INDICATORS	Disaggregated	Applicable	Cumulative Value Targeted	Reporting Period Reached	Cumulative Period Reached
Number of people assisted through livelihood restoration activities, by sex	Male	Yes	1,470	0	1,489
	Female	Yes	2,030	0	2,505
	Other	NA	NA	NA	NA

Percent of beneficiaries reporting their livelihoods restored within three to six months after receiving support	N/A	Yes	75%	NA	75%
Total USD amount channeled into the program area through livelihoods restoration activities	N/A	Yes	\$19.6 /beneficiary (\$68,600 total)	0	\$19.6 /beneficiary (\$68,600 total)
Subsector: Microfinance					
INDICATORS	Disaggregated	Applicable	Cumulative Value Targeted	Reporting Period Reached	Cumulative Period Reached
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 Q3, the 480 adult male and female resilience groups received Income Generating Activities (IGA) training and the 260 youth resilience group participants received 1-month vocational trainings. The vocational trainings focused on skills such as carpentry, masonry, soap making and tailoring.

A total of 24 women's resilience and men's resilience groups in both Bangassou and Rafai received 1 million CFA (\$2,000) to undertake community livelihood activities. Each resilience group comprises of 20 members. Throughout, and after the Q4 reporting period, Mercy Corps monitored the activities of the adult resilience groups whose income generating activities which spanned from the trading meat products, selling smoked fish, producing and selling items including clothes, bricks and furniture to mechanical service provision. Mercy Corps staff regularly met with resilience group members to inquire and follow up on the progress of the disbursement and use of IGA funds. Given the closure in the Q4 period of other grants co-financing resilience group activities and Mercy Corps staff there was a slight interruption in the monitoring of the livelihood activities of the resilience groups. Mercy Corps therefore continues to monitor activities and work with resilience groups on the full and successful implementation of livelihood activities. In certain cases, such as what was reported by Mercy Corps Bangassou staff, interpersonal conflicts between certain resilience group members has hindered the successful implementation of activities. Mercy Corps staff with experience in reconciliation methods who have previously worked in listening center psychosocial support are therefore proactively mediating such conflicts.

Given the earlier disbursement of IGA funds, future socioeconomic activities will therefore largely focus on the creation of new resilience groups and the follow-up of earlier livelihood

restoration activities. As with the slight shift in expected protection related beneficiaries, the September 2014 – September 2015 economic recovery activities will not have a specific focus on LRA affected communities.

SECTOR #3 Agriculture and Food Security		<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: 2,000	IDP: 2,000		
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	1,160	0	1,160
	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

Agricultural Tool Kits:

All activities under the Agriculture and Food Security sector in Bangassou were completed during the last reporting period. Please refer to the previously submitted reports for more details. Objective 3 between the original SERAP agreement and the modification of assistance award for the September 2014 – September 2015 period remains unchanged. Given the injection of further funds in this objective for the next fiscal year, Mercy Corps will re-launch food security and agriculture activities beginning the next quarter. The final indicator results will be shared when the final evaluation is completed.

SECTOR #4 Humanitarian Coordination and Information Management		<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		
Beneficiaries Reached (Cumulative)		Total: 2000	IDP: 2000		
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	8 (33%)
Number and percentage of humanitarian organizations directly contributing to information products	N/A	Yes	25	1	9 (36%)
Number of products made available by information management services that are accessed by clients	N/A	Yes	12	1	6 (50%)

Throughout the first month of this reporting period Mercy Corps submitted reports via the online based database to the Action Against Hunger (ACF) Early Warning System in Mbomou prefecture. The reports detailed the status and any fluctuation in local market prices which would feed into a larger a historical compilation of data. Such data would then serve to highlight commercial and community resiliency, or weakness, in the face of gross fluctuations in basic food, hygiene and livelihood amenities. All Early Warning System activities finished in early August due to the end of ACF's funding for the project. However humanitarian information continues to be regularly shared via the monthly Heads of Office meetings taking place amongst humanitarian actors in both Bangassou and Rafai. Of note, Objective 4 remains unchanged in the modification of assistance award.

5. Monitoring & Evaluation

Program staff members continue to use the GBV Information Management System (GBVIMS) to collect data on gender based violence cases seen in the listening center. All data and information from the first phase of the program's results will be collected for the final program evaluation.

6. Coordination

As mentioned above, Mercy Corps has begun to forge informal working partnerships with medical service providers such as MSF-Belgium and Cordaid so as to offer more comprehensive information during trainings and sensitizations of available GBV related services. Mercy Corps participates in weekly security meetings in Bangassou with other humanitarian aid partners in the area, including ACTED, MSF-Belgium, CRS and Cordaid, in order to share important security related information. These same NGOs meet monthly to report on activities and coordinate any potentially over-lapping programming. 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

The agriculture and food security program activities and community counselor trainings have been concluded in the third quarter. Consequently, the fourth quarter was focused on continuing play therapy activities, following up with the resilience groups who previously received VSLA and IGA training and continuing protection activities such as psychosocial support to survivors through the listening centers.

Overall, the continued violence in Bambari and Bangui has significantly affected the delivery of materials and subsequently the carrying out of Mercy Corps activities on schedule. Additionally, the regular suspension of flights between Bangui and Bangassou/Rafai has meant that staff cannot undertake the necessary travel between offices and the transport of cash remains difficult.

As referenced above, in mid-September Mercy Corps signed a one year modification of assistance award prolonging budgeted activities until September 2015. The upcoming quarter will therefore focus on the continuation of protection and socioeconomic activities as well as the re-launching of agriculture and food security activities. Target beneficiaries for the September 2014 – September 2015 fiscal year will now no longer be specifically focused upon LRA affected communities and instead will more generally focus on vulnerable communities within the southeast such as children, women, families and survivors of violence, abduction and/or displacement. The August and September arrival of the new Protection and Community Resilience Program Managers for, respectively, Bangassou and Rafai, will therefore focus on the following SERAP activities:

- The purchase of two cars for the establishment of the mobile Listening Centers.
- Hiring of SERAP staff to focus on additional socioeconomic and new food security and agricultural activities.
- Continuation of Listening Center activities as well as community counselor and protection committee sensitizations.