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COMPLEX CRISES FUND: CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC MID-CYCLE PORTFOLIO REVIEW



December 2014

This document was produced for review by the United States Agency for International Development by Mr. Michael Haines, Senior Program Analyst for the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance Office of Program, Policy, and Management.

ACCRONYMS

AB	Anti-Balaka
AI	Appreciative Inquiry
AOR	Agreement Officer Representative
CA	Cooperative Agreement
CCF	Complex Crises Fund
CDCS	Country Development and Cooperation Strategy
CoP	Chief of Party
CPP	CAR Partnership for Peace
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
CS3	Office of Crisis Surge Support Staff
DCHA	Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration
DoS	Department of State
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
GDA	Global Development Alliance
GoCAR	Government of the Central African Republic
IGA	Income Generating Activity
MC	Mercy Corps
MINUSCA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic
NCE	No-cost Extension
OU	Operating Unit
PAD	Project Appraisal Document
PD	Project Description
PMP	Performance Management Plan
PPM	Office of Program, Policy, and Management
SCWG	Social Cohesion Working Group
QDA	Quality Data Analysis
SECC	Securing, Empowering, Connecting Communities (CRS)
SFCG	Search for Common Ground
SSR	Security Sector Reform
SVC	Stabilizing Vulnerable Communities (MC)
ToC	Theory of Change
ToT	Training of Trainers
USG	U.S. Government

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Mid-Cycle Portfolio Review (MPR) Team would like to extend our appreciation to the many individuals from USAID, Department of State, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Mercy Corps (MC), and Search for Common Ground (SFCG). From USAID, we recognize Mr. L. Paul Sevier, CS3 Field Program Officer, in his facilitating role coordinating the field component of the MPR in close coordination with Department of State, implementing partners, and the Government of the Central African Republic (CAR). Without support from Department of State Officers Rebecca Hunter, Assistant Special Representative to the Central African Republic, David Brown, CAR Charge d'affaires, and Joel Maybury, Deputy Chief of Mission, the necessary engagements would not have been possible. Finally, a special thank you to our partners – herein Mr. Driss Moumane, SECC Chief of Party (CoP) for CRS, Mr. Thomas Paul Banza, Country Director for SFCG, and Mr. Jacques Terrenoire, MC Country Representative – who gave so generously of their time and expertise providing invaluable information and opportunities to directly engage programs and beneficiaries given the difficult operational conditions. We also recognize the leadership and guidance received in support of this multi-faceted initiative by USAID East Africa Regional Mission and specifically the interventions of Ms. Naida Zecevic-Bean, Regional Conflict Advisor.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2013, the Complex Crises Fund (CCF) Secretariat received multiple unsolicited proposals to address growing concerns over potential atrocity and instability in the Central African Republic (CAR). The CCF Secretariat, managed by DCHA's Office of Program, Policy, and Management (DCHA/PPM), responded by providing \$6 Million to support two new initiatives, Mercy Corps' "Stabilizing Vulnerable Communities" (SVC) and Search For Common Ground's "Better Together" – Supporting Community Empowerment and Non-Violence in the Central African Republic, amend the current Catholic Relief Services "Secured, Empowered, Connected Communities" (SECC) Program, and support a small rapid Response Fund and management staff support via DCHA's Office of Crises Surge Support Staff (CS3). The joint initiatives aim to support a broader Theory of Change (ToC) developed by DCHA/PPM which seeks to prevent atrocity in CAR by building community cohesion for targeted populations in key geographies and supporting methods of improving peace messaging and reconciliation.

While conducting its review, the CCF team found programs broadly supporting originally intended objectives outlined in the original Project Document (PD) developed by the DCHA/PPM. Strategic objectives were consistently articulated by all levels of intervention from the Implementing Partners (IPs) to sub-grantees and direct beneficiaries. Despite significant security and structural challenges, programs appear to be on track to achieve planned targets, no small thanks to no-cost extensions (NCE) for the highly capable and dedicated partners willing to undertake such daunting work in a Class 3 Emergency country. In addition to the critical convening power of USG as evinced by program activities, one operational highlight is the establishment of a functional coordinating mechanism to better leverage scarce USG and international resources – The Social Cohesion Working Group (SCWG) – which is further discussed later in this document. All told, the CCF-supported initiatives appear to be advancing the cause of peaceful transition while establishing operational and structural space for follow-on activities including the CAR Partnership for Peace (CPP).

PURPOSE, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

As part of USAID objectives regarding monitoring, evaluation, and learning, CCF country portfolios are subject to a Mid-Cycle Portfolio Review (MPR) of activities. Designed by DCHA/PPM, the review aims to analyze programs in the context of the operational environment while taking into consideration issues that may shape the future direction of these initiatives. Experience has demonstrated that a continuous analysis of the country's conditions better informs programming at three distinct but interconnected levels: (1) overall goal; (2) program objectives; and (3) activities funded.

To this end, USAID conducted an MPR of its CCF portfolio in CAR in December 2014. The review appraised current activities while considering emerging issues, constraints, program assumptions, and other relevant events to foster creativity and encourage flexibility to re-direct activities in exigent circumstances. The activity also provided strategic guidance as it considers course corrections during the no-cost extension period of activities. This was completed in accordance with a Statement of Work (Annex 1) developed in partnership with respective bureau, regional mission, and implementing partner inputs.

The principle process methodology was a “snap-shot” peer review process that fostered a direct and constructive dialogue on the status of recent achievements, future challenges, and longer-term direction of CCF-funded activities. These reviews were intended to provide the partners and program administrators with a third-party analysis by a team experienced in complex crisis environments to analyze and evaluate the CCF-funded project at the program and strategic levels mid-way through the lifecycle of the project. This process provided the implementing partner and country team with a timely perspective, feedback, and strategic recommendations for consideration to make any possible course adjustments to the project prior to the project’s end. The review also gave the CCF Secretariat the information necessary for making informed decisions regarding future resources, and allows the CCF Secretariat to be an effective advocate for the program to a variety of internal and external audiences including the U.S. Congress and public.

While in Washington, the team reviewed documents and interviewed appropriate stakeholders, including implementing partner staff, in-country staff, USG counterparts, and others involved with or aware of the CCF funded program (see Annex 2). In the field¹, despite limited mobility, time on the ground (5 days), personnel permitted to enter the country, and access due to security restrictions, the team interviewed a limited number Government of CAR (GoCAR) officials, implementing partners, grantees and beneficiaries and reviewed field-based activities with key stakeholders with specific emphasis on normative evaluation questions outlined later in this statement of work (Annex 1). These substantial restrictions impacted the comprehensive methodology employed for these types of reviews resulting in a diminished efficacy of the scope of analysis possible. In the end, this limited iterative process resulted in this final document and presentation of findings, conclusions, and recommendations.²

¹ Field portion of the review was limited to one person, Mr. Michael Haines, DCHA/PPM and Advisor to the CCF Secretariat. Traditional MPRs are up to four PAX, ideally three.

² IAW USAID Evaluation Policy – January 2011 and ADS 203.

POLITICAL BACKGROUND AND COUNTRY CONTEXT

In December 2013, CAR, which has experienced chronic political-military crisis for more than two decades, witnessed the worst violence outbreak since the March 24th coup d'état earlier in the year. The latter, which ousted former President François Bozizé, was led by the Seleka rebel coalition under the command of Mr. Michel Djotodia. The Seleka consists of long-running Central African rebel movements previously fighting to gain power across the north of the country, as well as predominantly Muslim fighters and opportunists from neighboring Chad and South Sudan. Since January 2014, despite the installment of interim president Ms. Catherine Samba-Panza by the "Transitional Government Council", large swaths of the country remain outside the control of the government in Bangui.

Authorities have been unable to restore order and security, creating an unprecedented security vacuum and humanitarian disaster in CAR. With total impunity and without a proper vision or political agenda for CAR, Seleka rebels and "Anti-Balaka" militias, have continuously been involved in widespread human rights violations including lootings, robberies, and murders, with Christians as the main targets.



Figure 1-US Charge d'Affaires convenes a meeting between Anti-Balaka and religious leaders in Bangui's restive PK5 during the CCF field visit.

Frustrated with killings, lootings, and abuses committed by Seleka fighters, "Anti-Balaka" militias emerged. Initially, Anti-Balaka were local Christian militias created under the previous regime to defend crops and cattle against criminals where the state was not present. These militias began seeking revenge against the Seleka. However, both Anti-Balaka and Seleka forces routinely target civilians perceived to be "allied" with the other

group, defining alliances predominantly along confessional lines. The conflation of "Seleka" with "Muslim" and "Anti-Balaka" with "Christian" identities and interests has also been stoked by armed groups themselves, as they seek to mobilize a supporter base.

As a result, the relationship between the Christian majority (80% of the population) and the Muslim minority (20%) was characterized by a climate of mistrust and fear between

religious identity groups. The conflict has been worsened by a series of high-profile attacks, including in Bossangoa in September 2013, Damarat in November 2013, and in Bangui on December 5, 2013 which saw an Anti-Balaka attack quickly turn into arbitrary killings of Muslims, and reciprocal killings of Christians. Currently, the collapse of the state, breakdown of law and order, and clashes between Christians and Muslims have led to widespread killings with drastic consequences, especially for women and children. More than one million people have been displaced since March 2013 and at least 1,500 but yet unknown exact number of lives have been claimed.

This has created a complex conflict which mixes politics and religious identity groups, and where inter-communal violence is mainly driven by the lack of access to reliable and credible information, the breakdown of social unity, and power struggle between the Seleka rebels and the multiplying Anti-Balaka militia groups. In addition, the weak capacity or simple non-existence of CAR institutions to mediate and defuse rapidly escalating inter-communal tensions and fighting, the breakdown of social and economic life, and the free circulation of weapons have also contributed to the current crisis. Finally, youth, without prospects for a better future and often lacking education, are misinformed and easily manipulated by the armed groups. In this context, insecurity, persistent misinformation and psycho-social trauma threaten to further undermine the country's social cohesion. This in turn threatens CAR's prospect of post-conflict reconstruction, including stability and democratization via a peaceful transition period and inter-faith dialogue.

DESCRIPTION OF CCF-FUNDED INITIATIVE

In response to demand signals from the international community to address programmatic gaps and concerns regarding potential atrocities in CAR, several unsolicited proposals were received and considered by the PPM-led CCF Secretariat. Following preparation of a CAR CCF Project Description (PD)³ and technical review of proposed interventions, DCHA Assistant Administrator notified Congress the intent to obligate \$6 Million to the following implementation mechanisms:

- Component 1: \$2M Cooperative Agreement (CA) with Mercy Corps (MC)
- Component 2: \$2M CA with Search for Common Ground (SFCG)
- Component 3: \$1.5M to amend a CA with Catholic Relief Services (CRS) managed by the East Africa Mission
- Component 4: \$320,000 for a Rapid Response Mechanism
- Component 5: \$180,000 to DCHA/CS3 for personnel surge support

³ See Annex 1: Central African Republic (CAR) CCF Project Description (updated)

The aforementioned implementing mechanisms supported overall program objectives designed by the CCF Secretariat:

- **Objective 1:** Strengthen local leaders' messaging on peace, tolerance, and non-violence.
- **Objective 2:** Strengthen local peacebuilding initiatives to foster a renewed sense of security, peaceful inter-group relations, and a foundation for rebuilding social cohesion.
- **Objective 3:** Improve access to timely and accurate public information

Catholic Relief Services - "Secured, Empowered, Connected Communities" (SECC)
PROJECT GOAL: Enable cohesive, self-directed, and connected communities to avoid or reduce their exposure to threats associated with the presence of armed groups and ongoing conflict in areas most vulnerable to attack and ongoing interreligious/inter-communal tensions in CAR.

CRS with partners SFCG, Caritas Bangassou, the Episcopal Justice and Peace Commissions of Bouar and Bangassou, and the Central African Inter-Religious Platform are implementing the three-year SECC program (2012-2015). The original intention of SECC was to improve the preparedness and communication capabilities of targeted communities in southeast CAR in areas vulnerable to attack by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and other armed groups, with the following strategic objectives:

- SO1: Empower target communities to employ adaptive strategies to address their security and community challenges, with an emphasis on the threat posed by the LRA.
- SO2: Target communities are better informed and connected: to each other; national and local government structures; resources; local civil society, and other local, national and international actors.
- SO3: Effective communication with local, national, regional, and international actors working in LRA-affected areas of CAR.

Following widespread violence in December 2013, as Anti-Balaka militia sought vengeance on Muslim communities for perceived association with acts committed by Seleka forces, the project, due to the availability of CCF resources, expanded to encompass social cohesion programming in northwest CAR and Bangui, which have been particularly affected by identity-based violence. Thus, a fourth strategic objective was adopted into SECC in January 2014:

- SO4: Support communities' ability to maintain and promote social cohesion and address inter-religious and intra-community conflicts.

The program aims to deliver custom-tailored capacity strengthening and conflict-sensitive program activities to improve intra- and inter-communal social cohesion and engage target communities to develop and implement more effective community-led, owned, and managed security plans. The SECC program works with participating communities to increase their capacity to engage with local government officials, to access and contribute information about their security context, and to access information about available humanitarian services. In addition, the program encourages and supports information exchange and dialogue between target communities and surrounding communities on issues of common concern via community radios and other media. The SECC team uses appreciative inquiry (AI) methodology throughout the program to identify and build upon communities' existing strengths and assets. Technical training is provided to empower target communities and ensure the project's overall effectiveness and sustainability.

Mercy Corps: Stabilizing Vulnerable Communities (SVC)

PROJECT GOAL: Address the accelerating violence in CAR by providing mechanisms for peaceful resolution of inter-community conflicts together with longer-term activities to rebuild trust and cooperation between affected communities.



Figure 2-Anti-Balaka meet community for dialog in Bimbo. During the event, one Anti-Balaka turned in his badges and bullets and renounced violence in front of the community.

This new project aims to work with community leaders in Bangui, Bouar and potentially Bombari to build their capacity to peacefully resolve inter-communal disputes, work together on projects of mutual interest, and promote tolerance. SVC is collaborating with village elders and community leaders, Christian and Muslim religious leaders, and men, women and youth who have been the victims of violence to promote peace and reconciliation, advancing mechanisms for sharing and resolving grievances, and providing incentives to work together for mutual benefit. The program is focusing on strengthening the capacity of local communities to manage conflict and insecurity, thereby building their resilience to future instability. SVC is promoting attitudes of tolerance and non-violence through support of inter-community peace messaging.

The initiative has three major strategic objectives:

- SO1: Community leaders of all faiths will have enhanced capacity to resolve inter-communal disputes peacefully.
- SO2: Muslim-Christian Communities are better able to work together.
- SO3: Public attitudes towards tolerance and non-violence are positively changed.

Search for Common Ground: “Better Together” – Supporting Community Empowerment and Non-Violence in the Central African Republic

PROJECT GOAL: Reduce intercommunity violence and support an inclusive transition process in the Central African Republic.

In this context, Search for Common Ground will implement a one year program aimed at intensively promoting alternatives to violence, managing rumors, and helping support local peace initiatives in Bangui, Bossangoa, and Bangassou. SFCG will couple this with capacity-building for key actors who can help support an inclusive and inclusive transition, and exit to the current crisis.

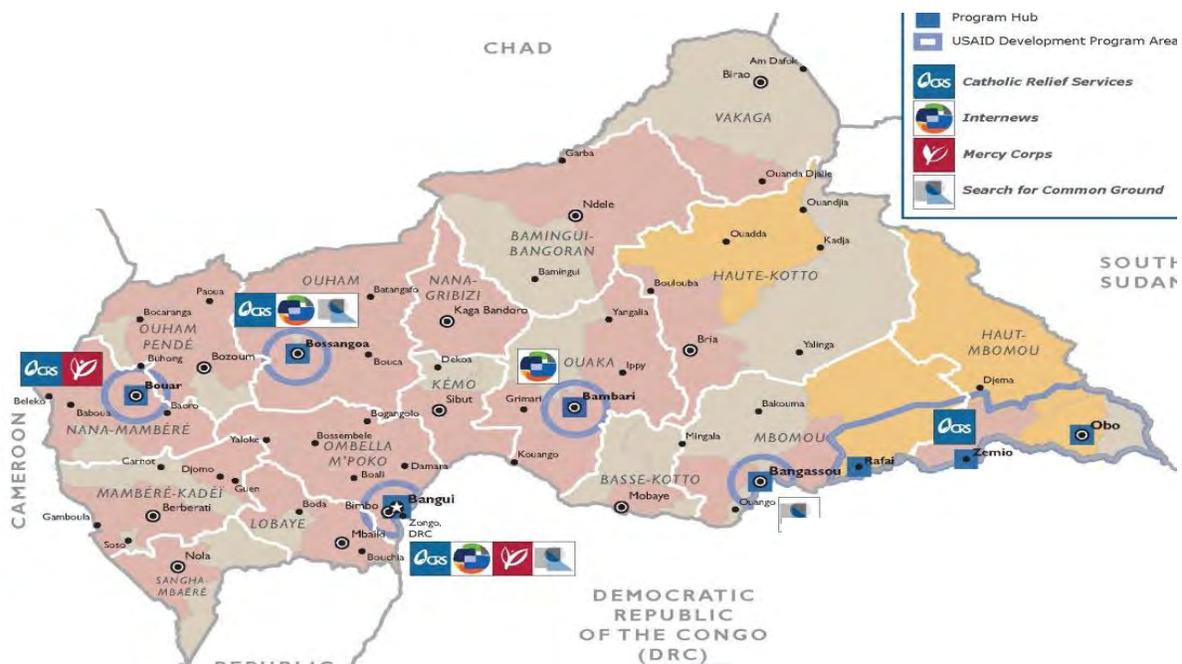
- SO1: Support attitudes favorable to non-violence and intergroup collaboration.
- SO2: Reduce community tensions and establishing a permanent dialogue in flashpoint areas.
- SO3: Strengthen the capacity of key non-state actors to foster dialogue and support a peaceful and inclusive transition.

In terms of geographical programmatic coverage, the map below (Map p. 9) demonstrates the overlap of CCF-funded initiatives, et al. This overlap would be addressed by the Social Cohesion Working Group and described later in this document under best practices.

- Bouar: CRS and MC
- Bossangoa: CRS, SFCG and Internews
- Bangui: CRS, MC, SFCG, and Internews

FINDINGS

In this section, we will attempt to address the seven questions outlined in the CCF MPR Scope of Work (Annex 1). These questions are divided into five areas of review: strategic, program, gender, environmental, and monitoring and evaluation. Within each area, there will be cross-cutting findings which may often be combined to provide the most logical evidence. Regrettably, due to the lack of team size and ability to meet partners in the field, impressions, reflections, and concepts may not be as fully developed as typically desired during an MPR.



Strategic Level Analysis

Question 1. Describe how political and contextual changes since the launch of the CCF-funded programs resulted in any changes in overall strategy, approach (Theory of Change or ToC) or activities.

Evinced by both written and verbal testimony by implementing partners and relevant stakeholders, there were no changes in the overall strategies or ToCs by any of the implementing mechanisms. This occurred despite changes in operational conditions and modification of initial assumptions made in project design:

- Significant movement of displaced Muslim populations to neighboring countries away from IP treatment areas encouraged partners to alter approaches to include these communities or work without them. This was specifically true for partners CRS and SFCG working in Bossangoa. To remedy, CRS was particularly innovative assessing and redesigning activities to effectively reach out to IDP communities



Figure 3-Tight security severely limits movement and operations at all levels.

in neighboring Chad and Cameroon where they have country programs and capabilities to leverage.

- More severe security, movement, and set-up challenges limited the ability of MC and SFCG to deliver programming according to the originally proposed timeline. This severely narrowed their operational burn rates in the initial 6 months to an absolute trickle. As a result, these two partners under CCF-funding were extended at no-cost by roughly 6 months.
 - MC: from January 14, 2015 to July 31st, 2015
 - SFCG: from January 16, 2015 to July 16, 2015

Only CRS, under the SECC agreement, has managed to more closely follow its spending and activity plan. With CCF funds, the program's interventions will continue at least until October 2015.

Question 2. To what extent have CCF programs supported initial assumptions and theory of change as identified in the original funding request?

With traditional CCF country portfolios, there is a single funding proposal originating from an Operating Unit (OU) which clearly outlines a central ToC in addition to addressing the specific selection criteria required by the Secretariat and Management Review Committee (MRC). Due to the lack of a permanent USG Embassy in CAR at the time of application or a USAID field presence, the traditional application process was amended and individual, unsolicited proposals from potential implementing partners were received and considered under a CAR CCF Project Description (PD). This process was completed in close consultation with USAID's Office of Acquisition and Assistance and Office of the General Council.

The CCF Secretariat-developed PD included an overall objective, ToCs, and three objectives included in the PD:

Overall Objective

- Helping prevent atrocities in CAR.

ToCs

- **ToC1:** If local leaders' non-violent messages are reinforced and disseminated more broadly, then "ordinary" citizens will be more motivated to resist calls to violence.
- **ToC2:** If local peace and community-building initiatives are strengthened, then they can help people feel more secure and in control of their lives, mitigate the polarization created by the violence, and help communities lay a foundation for social reconciliation.

- **ToC3:** If accurate information is more widely accessible, rumors will be less likely to spur displacement and violence and security for communities will be enhanced.

Programmatic Objectives

- **Objective 1:** Strengthen local leaders' messaging on peace, tolerance, and non-violence.
- **Objective 2:** Strengthen local peacebuilding initiatives to foster a renewed sense of security, peaceful inter-group relations, and a foundation for rebuilding social cohesion.
- **Objective 3:** Improve access to timely and accurate public information

Each of the implementing partners articulated a ToC in their original, unsolicited applications and during subsequent field interviews.

CRS If target communities improve social cohesion, they will work together more effectively to respond to the security challenges they face.

MC ToC1: If Muslim and Christian Leaders are provided with training and opportunities, then they will be able to peacefully resolve conflicts and reduce violence in their areas.

ToC2: If people from divided communities work together to increase their economic opportunities, then they will be more inclined to work together positively on other issues.

ToC3: If people see respected leaders speak out in favor of peace, then they will be less likely to view violence as a legitimate way to resolve differences.

SFCG If non-violent voices are reinforced and relationships between communities and individuals are restored, then the likelihood of violence will decrease.

Each implementing partner clearly verbalized ToCs and program objectives consistent with those stipulated by the CCF PD. There were, however assumptions made in the original partner proposals which later proved inaccurate effectively modifying programmatic approach, but not the broader strategy as outlined in the ToC. Examples:

- Each IP assumed the presence of substantial Muslim populations in their targeted geographical treatment zones. With most of the Muslim populations being displaced, partners had to amend approaches and either find remedies to include Muslims in the transition process or work exclusively with non-Muslim populations.

- CRS introduced a study of displaced CAR Muslims in Cameroon and Chad with the aim of introducing programmatic activities to sensitize returning Muslims. CRS is leveraging their regional presence in all area countries to facilitate this programmatic adjustment.
- Recognizing movement of internally-displaced Muslim populations to Bangui, all IPs have stepped up their coordinated efforts to address trauma healing, sensitization, and outreach activities in the capitol.
- IP work plans assumed 3-4 month period for start-up and initiation of activities in their respective treatment areas. This was clearly optimistic as each organization faced serious challenges in terms of security, including attacks on MC and CRS compounds, staff recruitment, and coordination with local partners, etc. Those partners initiating new activities in areas not previously engaged faced the greatest obstacles in establishing the necessary infrastructure to operate.
- Focusing their efforts on developing vertical and horizontal social linkages, IPs assumed these activities were of paramount importance over the creation of economic opportunities. This, however, seemed contrary to the significant testimony the review team encountered stressing jobs.

Question 3. How do CCF-funded programs provide synergy with initiatives undertaken by other donors and the Government of CAR?

USAID, in close coordination with Department of State (DoS), participates regularly in donor coordination mechanisms at all levels. From an operational field perspective, official coordination mechanisms for international partners of CAR are facilitated by the UN via their traditional “cluster” approach, though with little visible efficacy. Unfortunately, due to USAID’s limited presence, security and logistical restrictions, regular engagement by USAID in these processes is unpredictable, unreliable, and has not borne the kind of fruit one would anticipate in an environment flush with international resources.

One area of coordinated effort among CCF and related partners is via the Social Cohesion Working Group (SCWG), which will be further discussed later in the “Best Practices” section of this document. The SCWG, started by CCF-funded IPs and expanded to include relevant USG and other donor-supported organizations, operationally coordinates social cohesion programming across the country and has become a credible, effective alternative to the UN cluster. This credibility has been confirmed recently as the CAR Minister for Reconciliation, during a recent consultation related to this review, articulated her desire to work more closely with the SCWG to

coordinate activities and explore ways for the group to assist the GoCAR implement its National Dialog efforts.

A reoccurring theme, especially within the peace-building and social cohesion sectors, is the critical role of American leadership and convening power. Testimonials from several organizations and the GoCAR emphasized this point as a mistrust of France and MINUSCA were clearly articulated during field visits and in Washington. Illuminating this theme were the high level meetings between religious, Anti-Balaka, and Seleka leaders organized by the US Embassy. Furthermore, programmatic support in peace-building is primarily coming from the United States though the European Union is reportedly set to initiate a large-scale governance initiative through its Foreign Policy mechanism and partner UNDP.

Program Level Analysis

Question 4. From conception to initiation, describe program implementation including any institutional successes and challenges.

In typical circumstances, the CCF Secretariat would receive a funding application from an Operating Unit (OU) proposing an intervention which fits under its internal strategic framework and management capabilities. Said OU would manage the new or amended award providing comprehensive oversight consistent with ADS and other USAID policy requirements. Because the CAR awards were unsolicited and presented directly to the CCF Secretariat, management of the procurement and implementation procedures required fell on an office without the institutional capacity necessitating a modified approach to the program cycle. Although DCHA/PPM was able to expedite this process, in part from political pressure from the DCHA Front Office, it still caused a minimum 60-day delay in obligating programming.



Figure 4-IPs saying farewell to CS3 Officer L. Paul Sevier (center) at Embassy Bangui. Once Paul departed, there would be no officer on the ground to represent CCF.

Once contracts were signed or amended with IPs, several challenges adversely effected speedy implementation and oversight of activities. First, USAID's limited to no presence in CAR created a communication gap with IPs. The presence of a CCF-funded field officer (AOR) in Nairobi alongside contracting operations was far from the day-to-day IP management in Bangui or ideal given the high-profile nature of the portfolio. Despite a regular cadence of reporting, IPs described communication with USAID as "infrequent" and expressed concerns that "no one was paying

attention” given the lack of a physical presence in Bangui. There were also comments from IPs that in some cases, especially early on in the program cycle, USAID was unable to provide timely responses to inquiries or were not specifically prepared to address programmatic issues such as diminished burn rates or staffing challenges. IPs noted that extensions were also addressed late in the program cycle creating some operational challenges. Second, movement, security, and staff recruiting concerns inhibited IPs to speedily deploy and set up resources necessary for program implementation. Movement and security challenges inhibited USAID field officers to conduct regular management of activities including monitoring and evaluation.

According to the IPs, once a well-qualified, French-speaking USAID Field Officer was in place in Bangui, communication and coordination improved substantially. There was considerable appreciation from all IPs for the regular USAID physical presence in Bangui to reliably engage on necessary programmatic matters. Despite the severe lack of mobility provided to USAID by Embassy Bangui, this officer was able to develop functional relationships with IPs facilitating better understanding of program challenges and provide technical guidance. As the Field Officer was the only longer-term USAID officer in Bangui and occupied an office next to the Charge d’Affaires and Deputy Chief of Mission (at the Embassy’s behest), the position was effectively treated on the ground as a County Representative. Consequently, the ability to dedicate time solely for the purposes of managing CCF awards was impacted as the relationship evolved. What is more, there appeared to be unclear guidance provided to the deployed field officer by the DCHA. Specifically, DCHA/PPM’s Statement of Work for the field officer was focused primarily on management of the CCF portfolio whereas the DCHA Deputy Assistant Administrator, in his verbal guidance, implied responsibilities beyond this scope. Being the nexus of all things USAID in Bangui, the field officer was clearly pulled in multiple directions as the embassy stood up with limited USG expatriate presence.

At the end of the day, it was made clear on the ground Department of State is supportive of a permanent USAID presence in the country – a presence which could only be provided by USAID Africa Bureau.

From individual program perspective, the slow start up, especially for newcomers MC and SFCG in the social cohesion arena, hampered initial



Figure 5-Muslim leaders meet regularly with former Anti-Balaka in the 7th Arrondissement.

activities. Once staff and programs were in place, activities ramped up to fever pitch quickly. Based on reports and testimony, CRS was significantly meeting its planned targets with MC and SFCG in catch-up mode. The no-cost extensions for MC and SFCG should provide ample opportunity to substantively reach intended targets. In any case, although not able to visit treatment areas outside of the Bangui Region, it was evinced from this review field visit that efforts by all partners are underway and bearing fruit. In several areas of Bangui, specifically the 3rd and 7th Arrondissements where previous conflict had decimated the population, life was returning to normal – possibly in part to the cohesion activities of our IPs. According to the Mayor of the 7th Arrondissements, “USAID’s program has brought the community together creating space for peaceful dialog and resolution of differences. As a result, people are getting involved, both Anti-Balaka and Seleka, and life is getting back to normal ... no big problems exist.”

Additional considerations:

- This portfolio review revealed a core question: can social cohesion work be effective without adequate security and initial efforts at DDR, SSR? Are programs cost-effective and realistically able to achieve their core objectives in such an operational environment? Burn rates, a key indicator of program progress in terms of implementation, were low for all partners – particularly those with less experience in country.
- There may be enough evidence to indicate that social cohesion work without an attached or follow-on income generation activities (IGAs) will not necessarily succeed or at least be sustainable – given the dire economic circumstances of your average Central African. Communities are being asked to attend social cohesion-related training programs not without transportation and other cost to them. IGAs such as cash-for-work programs tied to social cohesion work can be a strong incentive for those wanting to building peace but who can barely meet their economic needs. This is an issue cited often by beneficiaries of CCF local partners/recipients of assistance. In short, there is enough evidence to suggest that poverty (in addition to insecurity) is an obstacle to social cohesion work. The absence of basic government services is an additional barrier in the ability of individuals, CSOs and communities in effectively applying social cohesion training. The work of MC is a case in point where social cohesion work complemented with IGAs can work.
- Given the considerable demand and lack of a synergistic “force multiplier” effect of layered stabilization and development interventions, current CCF-supported programming may not be designed or geographically scoped to achieve the necessary impacts. Despite IP attempts to employ a ToT method of disseminating trauma-healing throughout the community, the size and design of the awards

could be viewed as insufficient. Also, programming can be viewed as urban centric (Bangui, Bossangoa, Bangassou, Bouar) limiting their rural effect.

- How can partners work more effectively with peacekeeping operations and other civilian-military actors without compromising image and role of civil society?

Gender Analysis

Question 5. To what extent have program design and activities provided for gender equity?

Due to the limited size of the review team, time and security restrictions, there were few opportunities to “deep dive” beyond the reporting surface into gender issues. To varying degrees, each IP claims to engage in activities promoting gender mainstreaming and have reported both activities and results to evince this claim. None of the IPs, though, have specific gender-oriented strategic objectives but have included gender-based indicators in their performance monitoring plans.

The IPs also had disparate institutional approaches to gender issues: CRS and MC explicitly detailed their office’s gender policy – both internal and externally applied – and how they either had a gender advisor on staff or regular support from the home office. SFCG noted that they had an office code of conduct but did not have a specific officer on staff or readily available from Washington to provide support. This is not to say no one was available, the team at SFCG could not articulate the gender intervention. When we attended an SFCG community theater event in the 7th and 3rd Arrondissements, there was heavy diversity in participation – including dancers of both genders.

Environmental Analysis

Question 6. To what extent have program design and activities integrated environmental safeguards?

Each of the programs has a current IEE on file and were under negative determinations for significant environmental impact. In follow-up conversations with IPs, only Mercy Corps indicated that this document would need to be updated should any of their small grants under their program demonstrate a potential environmental effect. To this end, we have requested a copy of any amended IEE be shared with the CCF Secretariat once available.

Monitoring and Evaluation Analysis

Question 7. Describe current monitoring and evaluation systems in place for CCF-funded initiatives including their methodology, efficacy, challenges and coordination with implementing partners and its influence on program management.

Each of the programs has their requisite Performance Measurement Plan (PMP)/M&E Plan in place and have dedicated staff collecting and reporting data against indicators specifically designed for these interventions. USAID, through its East Africa management structure in Nairobi, participated in the development of these indicators and has met with partners to conduct Quality Data Analysis (QDA). USAID East Africa, as well as a myriad of Washington-based stakeholders are regular beneficiaries of the reporting regime which includes a bi-weekly update in addition to quarterly and annual reports.

Although not clearly contractually mandated, partners have been requested by USAID Nairobi and USAID Washington to prepare bi-weekly updates covering four topic areas: project progress, security updates, key challenges, priorities for the next two weeks. Ostensibly, this extra-contractual, frequent reporting regime was to allow USAID to better monitor and evaluate performance, understand challenges and conditions, and heighten accountability where no office is present. To this end, each of the IPs has complied and provides these updates.

In terms of informative evaluations, there are no specific efforts by any of the IPs to scientifically measure programmatic impact other than providing “anecdotal” evidence and logical inference from data collected. One idea discussed was a joint analysis of program interventions using the SCWG platform and Memorandum of Understanding paid for through a joint pooling of resources. Perhaps additional resources from the CCF award (Component 4 Rapid Response Mechanism) could be available for such an endeavor.

CONCLUSIONS

Despite the institutionally challenging origination of the intervention via non-traditional means and slower than anticipated execution of activities on the ground for reasons previously mentioned, the CCF-supported portfolio appears to be on track. Partners continue to support a robust intervention illuminating ToCs, geographic scopes, adaptive programming, and results overwhelmingly consistent with the original CCF Program Description. These initiatives are impressive in their convening capability across multi-ethnic and religious lines while building durable, resilient communities capable of receiving and withstanding future shocks. The comprehensive coordination undertaken by CCF-supported partners as they leverage resources and expertise programmatic efficacy and anticipated impacts. Finally, these programs and coordination are increasing the operational space and coordination framework to enable

future programs under the CAR Partnership for Peace (CPP) Global Development Alliance (GDA) as it formalizes additional programming in the social cohesion space.

Of course, there are a great many lessons to be learned, especially those internal to DCHA PPM as we move forward in managing CCF. The CAR Portfolio presented several challenges to DCHA/PPM and the CCF Secretariat from an administrative perspective and highlighted essential opportunities to build internal capacities.

One item is clear. USAID/USG convening authority should not be underestimated and can be an effective tool to promote the broader peace process. While visiting Bangui in December 2014, there was an impressive array of engagements sponsored by the US Embassy or USAID IPs bringing belligerent communities or ex-combatants together to engage in useful dialog. This, albeit anecdotally, verified that USAID and CCF programming can play a very useful and beneficial role in promoting peace and prevent atrocity in CAR.

LESSONS LEARNED & BEST PRACTICES

- Best Practice: The Social Cohesion Working Group (SCWG) was originally conceived at the kick-off partners meeting with USAID in Duala, Cameroon in Winter 2014. More than simply a geographical coordination body, the SCWG has developed into a credible tool to streamline programming through leveraging organizational capability, resources, and comparative advantages in the social cohesion sphere. Originally intended only for CCF partners CRS, MC, and SFCG, The Danish Refugee Council (DRC) was added due to their efforts nationally in social cohesion. The group has since expanded further to include additional organizations which will add value to the coordination effort. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the original partners is included in this report under Annex 3.
- Lesson Learned: Despite managing the CCF account, DCHA/PPM has limited capacity to directly contract programming. As DCHA/PPM had to quickly mobilize resources to support front office objectives, it was quickly realized that there was no “clear path” to execute this initiative without significant extemporization to complete the traditional, required steps required.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For DCHA/PPM

- Prioritize increasing capability to directly plan, design, implement and manage, and evaluate programs within the Office. As more non-or-limited presence countries potentially become targets for CCF, the office will need to have the

bandwidth available to respond quickly. This would mean expanding functional roles in support of the program cycle to include more C/AOR trained officers, designated contracting backstop support, and a more well defined operational and reporting relationship with OUs.

- Develop a global Project Appraisal Document (PAD) to serve as the basis for conducting programs in non-presence countries or with missions which do not have existing or appropriate PADs. DCHA/PPM was fortunate to have source documents for CAR but what would be the basis in, for example, Cameroon or Chad?
- Ensure that Field Program Officers deployed to non-presence countries to contractually manage a CCF portfolio as AOR not only possess the required skills sets needed to successfully complete this task, but have a clear Statement of Work to eliminate any confusion and mission creep. Of course, it is always understood that there may be additional requirements beyond the scope ... this is USAID!
- Consider using, where politically and practically appropriate, the SCWG model for implementer coordination. This would be particularly useful for CCF initiatives employing multiple mechanisms to support their ToC. See Annex 3 for the MoU. This platform could also be a useful coordination tool for future programming under the CPP GDA now in its initial stages.

For USAID/AFR

- Study the feasibility of placing a permanent Country Representative (CR) in CAR to oversee the broad array of USAID interventions while representing the equities of USAID in this donor intensive environment. Without a permanent CR, DCHA TDYs, managing shorter term interventions often get caught in the role taking them away from their assigned duties effecting program monitoring and subsequent performance.

For USAID Nairobi/USAID Kinshasa

- Focus the attention of future Field Program Officers directly on their respective programs by locating their physical desks far away from the Embassy Bangui Front Office. The temptation of the Embassy leadership to involve USAID, at any level, in Embassy management and activities as a “USAID Country Representative” is strong given the small numbers of American staff in Bangui.
- Amend or end the bi-weekly reporting requirement. Partners noted that such frequent reporting does not allow for thoughtful analysis given the two week time window. Perhaps a monthly report or better, stick with the contractually required Q and annual reports. They also noted the increased LOE required to continually preparing these bi-weekly report.

For the IPs:

- Engage the Ministry of Reconciliation, via the SCWG, to consider the possible provision of technical assistance surrounding the National Dialog Process. The GoCAR recognizes they cannot implement national dialog strategy without assistance from civil society.
- Support sustainable coordination and future implementation by including or strengthening UN/GoCAR capability to serve this critical role once the SCWG has run its course.
- Consider leveraging or pooling resources to conduct a comprehensive evaluation or evaluative analysis of the impacts of your joint interventions. This could be extremely informative not only for your own operations, but provide useful feedback to USAID and GoCAR.
- Develop methods to improve not only data collection, but measuring results and understanding of the impacts. This would be most useful for planning future interventions, but marketing the efficacy of stabilization interventions to outside actors.
- Involve additional capacity to strengthen gender mainstreaming approaches to both internal and external operations. Although not a comprehensive review of all activities given constraints, strengthening gender sensitive operations appears to be an area of opportunity for the partners.

Annex 1: MPR Scope of Work

I. Purpose and Overview

All Complex Crises Fund (CCF) supported initiatives are required to perform a Mid-Cycle Portfolio Review (MPR), in which a team assembled by the CCF Secretariat considers program performance within the context of the dynamic operational environment while taking into consideration issues that may shape the future direction of these initiatives. USAID will conduct an MPR for its CCF-funded activities for Central African Republic 2014. The purpose of the MPR is three fold:

- 1) Examine current activities as related to the initial proposed Theory of Change (ToC) at the strategic and programmatic levels considering emerging issues, constraints, assumptions, and other relevant events to foster creativity and encourage flexibility to re-direct activities
- 2) Support USAID Forward⁴ institutional learning objectives by affording the CCF Secretariat immediate access to best practices and lessons learned which might then be immediately applied across the broader CCF global portfolio and agency; and,
- 3) Strengthen the position of the CCF Secretariat to represent, advocate and support the fund's initiatives to a broader audience of internal and external stakeholders.

This SOW outlines some initial research questions addressing strategic and program levels, environmental compliance, and monitoring and evaluation operations. Also included is a notional, flexible timetable for the process.

II. Contextual Background

In March 2013, the Seleka rebel alliance seized power in CAR by overthrowing long-time President François Bozizé. In the aftermath, rebel groups have killed, kidnapped, and raped hundreds; have recruited up to an estimated 6,000 child soldiers; and are engaged in widespread looting throughout the country. This has also led to the formation of self-defense groups, mainly among Christian and other non-Muslim communities, and escalating sectarian violence and tensions. In November 2013, French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius declared CAR "on the verge of genocide." This sentiment was echoed by Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson who noted that CAR was "descending into complete chaos before our eyes" and presents a "profoundly important test to our international solidarity and our responsibility to prevent atrocities."

Historically, CAR has received modest U.S. Government assistance, with the exception of a program focused on the protection of civilians from the Lord's Resistance Army, until late 2013 when the serious atrocities began. To address the current challenges, the Complex Crises Fund supports programming focused on three objectives:

Objective 1: Strengthen local leaders' messaging on peace, tolerance, and non-violence.

- Support for peace messaging via media from peace leaders across society, e.g. religious leaders, youth, women, private sector, traditional leaders, elders, locally legitimate local government officials.
- A non-violence campaign promoting tolerance in flashpoint communities with locally-relevant messages, including positive non-violent activism, spot-messaging campaigns, training of civil society initiatives in communications for violence prevention, and support for community-led communications and dialogue campaigns

Objective 2: Strengthen local peacebuilding initiatives to foster a renewed sense of security, peaceful inter-group relations, and a foundation for rebuilding social cohesion.

- Support local peace leaders and organizations in planning local peace and community-building initiatives with mentoring and technical assistance
- Training for key actors in dispute resolution, mediation, multi-stakeholder dialogues, protection, human rights and conflict transformation
- Support follow-on actions emerging from local problem-solving dialogues

Objective 3: Improve access to timely and accurate public information

- Training journalists in conflict-sensitive reporting
- Training community leaders in flashpoint communities in rumor management

⁴ <http://www.usaid.gov/evaluation>

- Material support to community radio stations to support the resumption of broadcasting
- Institutional capacity building through in-situ coaching for radio stations

III. Methodology

The principle process methodology is a “snap-shot” peer review process that fosters a direct and constructive dialogue on the status of recent achievements, future challenges, and longer-term direction of CCF-funded activities. These Mid-Cycle Portfolio Reviews (MPR) intend to provide the Mission with a third-party analysis by a team experienced in complex crisis environments through analysis of CCF-funded activities at the program and strategic levels approximately mid-way through the lifecycle of the project. This process typically provides the country team with a timely perspective, feedback, and strategic recommendations for consideration to make any possible course adjustments to the project prior to the project’s end. The review also gives the CCF Secretariat the information necessary for making informed decisions regarding future resources, and allows the CCF Secretariat to be an effective advocate for the program to a variety of audiences.

While in Washington, the team will review documents shared and interview relevant stakeholders, including implementing partner staff, in-country staff, USG counterparts, and others involved with or aware of the CCF funded program. In the field and where feasible, the team will interview relevant government officials, other donor staff, implementing partners, grantees and beneficiaries and review field-based activities with key stakeholders with specific emphasis on normative evaluation questions outlined later in this statement of work. Should the conduct of this MPR field component not occur in CAR but at a third country location, a modified review would need to be considered. In either case, this iterative process will result in a final document and presentation of findings, conclusions, and recommendations.⁵

IV. Questions

The mid-term review will address the following key questions with the understanding that other issues may arise prompting a series of different questions that will better serve the fluid country context.

a. Strategic Analysis

1. Describe how political and contextual changes since the launch of the CCF-funded programs resulted in any changes in overall Theory of Change (ToC) or activities.

Illustrative Sub Questions:

- a. Describe the implications of emerging issues and their impact on program strategy, approach, and implementation with a view toward specific initiative timelines.
 - b. Are the program’s assumptions and objectives still valid given changes in the operating environment or do they need to be re-evaluated?
2. To what extent have CCF programs supported initial assumptions and theory of change as identified in the original funding request?
 3. How do CCF-funded programs provide synergy with initiative undertaken by other donors and the CAR Government?

b. Program Analysis

1. From conception to initiation, describe program implementation including any institutional successes and challenges.

Illustrative Sub Questions:

- b. Provide stakeholder and beneficiary views on the implementation.
- c. Describe any lessons learned and/or best practices identified since program start-up with regard to initial analysis, assumptions, and program design (target areas, actors, and issues)?
- d. What human, financial, and time resources are required (and why) in order to maximize program performance in the remaining months?
- e. Given security concerns and lack of direct interaction with at the field level.

c. Gender Analysis

1. To what extent have program design and activities provided for gender equity?

Illustrative Sub Questions:

- a. How is the National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) implemented in the program? Identify lessons learned and/or best practices if any.

⁵ IAW USAID Evaluation Policy – January 2011 and ADS 203

- b. What does the gender mainstreaming approach involve?
- c. Identify the areas where gender inequality is of greatest concern as well as successful examples of gender equality and female empowerment.
- d. **Environmental Analysis**
 - 1. To what extent have steps been taken to meet mandatory 22 CFR 216 environmental compliance requirements (ADS 204) during project design and implementation?
- e. **M&E Analysis**
 - 1. Describe current monitoring and evaluation systems in place for CCF-funded initiatives including their methodology, efficacy, challenges and coordination with implementing partners and its influence on program management.
 - Illustrative Sub Questions:
 - a. To what extent does USAID possess institutional capacity to monitor and evaluate activities?
 - b. Illuminate EA mission and IP documentation of program efficacy.
 - c. Describe mechanisms for learning and feedback from both internal USG and external sources (IPs) and how these lessons are incorporated into future programming.

V. Deliverables

The team's principal deliverable will be a written report, approximately ten to fifteen pages in length, identifying and analyzing key accomplishments, challenges, constraints and opportunities the program is contending along with findings and recommendations to help guide future activity. Prior to field mission conclusion, the team will meet with the USAID/CAR-EA to review the intended content of the written report. Upon return to USAID/Washington, the team will orally brief the DCHA/AA, the CCF Monitoring and Review Committee, the Africa Bureau/AA and interested staff on relevant actions, findings and recommendations.

VI. Team Composition

Lead/Facilitator: Mr. Michael Haines – DCHA/Office of Policy, Programs, and Management
 Member: Ms. Bridget Moix – DCHA/ Office of Conflict Mitigation and Management (DC Only)
 Member: Mr. L. Paul Sevier – DCHA/Office of Crisis Surge Support Staff (Bangui Only)

VII. Anticipated Report Outline

- a. Executive Summary
- b. Purpose, Scope, and Methodology
- c. Political Background and Country Context
- d. Brief Description of CCF-funded Programs
- e. Findings
- f. Conclusions, Lessons Learned & Best Practices
- g. Recommendations
- h. Annexes

VIII. Schedule: CAR MPR 2014

24 October 2014:	SOW Finalized
3-21 November 2014:	Desk Review, Interviews in DC
3-10 December 2014:	In-brief & consultations with USAID/EA, USAID/CAR, Implementing Partners, Sub-grantees, and beneficiaries (where appropriate)
15-19 December 2014:	Drafting of Final Report
22-31 December 2014:	Submit draft of Final Report to USAID/EA & USAID/CAR for review/comment
9 January 2015:	Submit final report to DCHA/PPM for review
12-16 January 2015:	Final team debriefs USAID/Washington, posting final report to the DOC

VIV. Scheduling and Logistics

Team accommodation, transportation, and appropriate partner engagements will be coordinated by team facilitator and respective field and Washington-based operating units.

Complex Crises Fund: CAR				
Program Performance Review				
Meeting List				
Date	Location	Organization	Positions	Comment
11/10/2014	Washington	Search for Common Ground	VP Programs, Africa Director	Program Overview, SOW
11/10/2014	Washington	US Institute of Peace	CAR Religious Leaders	Context Briefing
11/14/2014	Baltimore	Catholic Relief Services	Director, M/E Office, Africa Justice and Peacebuilding Working Group	Program Overview, SOW
11/19/2014	Washington	US Department of State	CSO , Deputy Special Representative for CAR	Context Briefing, SOW
12/4/2014	Bangui	Mercy Corps	Country Rep., Program Manager, Et al., USAID	Program Overview, SOW
12/4/2014	Bangui	US Embassy Bangui	DCM, USAID	Visit Bimbo Prison
12/4/2014	Bangui	Mercy Corps	Mercy Corps Team, Bimbo Community Youth, USAID, DCM	Attend MC social cohesion event in Bimbo
12/4/2014	Bimbo	Mercy Corps	DCM, USAID, Mercy Corps, Bimbo Community Leaders	Roundtable with Bimbo Community Leaders
12/4/2014	Bimbo	US Embassy Bangui	DCM, USAID, Bimbo Community	Meeting with Bimbo Mayor
12/4/2014	Bangui	Agency Francais Development	AFD, USAID, CDM, Charge	Meeting with AFD to discuss programs
12/5/2014	Bangui	Catholic Relief Services	CRS SECC Staff, USAID	Program Overview, SOW
12/5/2014	Bangui	Catholic Relief Services	National Civil Society Organizations, USAID, CRS	Roundtable with National Civil Society Leaders Community Leaders
12/5/2014	Bangui	Catholic Relief Services	National Political, Civil Society, and administrative leaders, CRS, USAID	Roundtable with national political, civil society, and administrative leaders
12/5/2014	Bangui	Catholic Relief Services	Meeting with Representatives of state institutions	Roundtable with key leaders of state institutions including high court,

				electoral commission, et al.
12/6/2014	Bangui	Search for Common Ground	SFCG Country Team	Program Overview, SOW
12/6/2014	Bangui	Search for Common Ground	SFCG CD, Key Partner Organizations	Roundtable with SFCG Partners
12/6/2014	Bangui	Search for Common Ground	CDA, USAID, Mayor of 7eme Bangui	Meet and Greet, Discuss SFCG Program
12/6/2014	Bangui	Search for Common Ground	SFCG, USAID, 7eme Bangui Community	Participatory theater performance
12/6/2014	Bangui	Search for Common Ground	SFCG, USAID, CDA	Community-building activity in PK5
12/6/2014	Bangui	Charge d'Affaires	CDA, USAID, AB Leaders, Muslim Community	Community invitation to CDA to visit the Mosque, citizens.
12/6/2014	Bangui	French Embassy Cultural Center	CDA, DCM, USAID, International community	Re-opening of the French Culture Center
12/7/2014	Bangui	Catholic Relief Services	AB, Imams, USAID, CDA, CRS	Meeting with former Seleka and AB at Imam Oumar Residence
12/7/2014	Bangui	Catholic Relief Services	CRS Country Team, USAID	Follow-up discussion of Social Cohesion Programming
12/7/2014	Bangui	Catholic Relief Services	CRS, USAID, Fmr. Minister of National Reconciliation	Context Discussion, Follow-up
12/8/2014	Bangui	Ministry of National Reconciliation	USAID, CDA, Minister of National Reconciliation	Courtesy Call, context briefing, program discussion
12/8/2014	Bangui	USAID	Diverse national and international development partners, USAID	GDA/PPP Q&A Session
12/8/2014	Bangui	USAID	CRS, MC, SFCG	Final Dinner, Follow-on
12/10/2014	Nairobi	USAID	Conflict Advisor	Post field visit briefing, SOW
12/10/2014	Nairobi	USAID	Deputy Mission Director	Post field visit briefing

**Central African Republic (CAR)
CCF Project Description (updated)**

Duration/Life of Project: 12 months

Total Budget: \$6,000,000 Complex Crises Fund (CCF)

Implementation Mechanisms:

Component 1: \$2M Cooperative Agreement with Mercy Corps

Component 2: \$2M Cooperative Agreement with Search for Common Ground

Component 3: \$1.5M to existing East Africa Mission-managed Catholic Relief Services

Component 4: \$320,000 for a Rapid Response Mechanism

Component 5: \$180,000 to DCHA/OCR for personnel surge support

Managed by: USAID/ EA with support from USAID/W and initial DCHA/OCR deployment

This project description will reference, as appropriate, all aspects of the \$6 million CCF funding to support the overall objective in CAR to help prevent atrocities. However, for purposes of covering the obligation requirements of a Project Appraisal Document, this description only covers the projects under the cooperative agreements with Mercy Corps and Search for Common Ground. USAID/EA will address the obligations requirements for the modification separately.

Overall objective: Helping prevent atrocities in the Central African Republic

1. CCF eligibility criteria

Rapidly changing complex crisis

The crisis in the Central African Republic has reached a critical moment that requires a strong response from the United States Government. In the past few weeks, UN Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson said CAR was “descending into complete chaos before our eyes,” French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius said CAR was “on the verge of genocide,” and State PDAS Robert Jackson referred to CAR as “pre-genocidal” in his testimony to Congress. On December 5-6, more than 390 individuals, including children, were killed in Bangui in the most serious violence in the capital during the current crisis. Meanwhile, the UN Security Council unanimously passed a major resolution on the CAR, among other things, authorizing French and African troops under Chapter VII.

An opportunity exists to advance foreign policy priorities and objectives

Preventing genocide and mass atrocities is a core national security interest and core moral responsibility of the United States, as stated in the Presidential Study Directive on mass atrocities and by President Obama in announcing the results of that study. Currently, CAR is the country with the most acute risk of mass atrocities or genocide, yet still a chance to prevent atrocities from reaching a massive scale.

In addition to preventing mass atrocities, established USG policy objectives in CAR include expanding space for the provision of humanitarian assistance, re-establishing state authority throughout the country, and supporting a political transition including democratic elections. These objectives are fundamentally threatened by the current escalation of violence. Furthermore, a more severe or extended collapse of order in CAR could increase the risk of it becoming a safe haven for Boko Haram

and other extremist groups. Therefore, activities designed to prevent atrocities and mitigate violent conflict would support progress on the full range of USG objectives and interests in CAR.

Overwhelming urgent need that cannot be addressed through other funding sources

The rapidly deteriorating security situation and fear of escalating attacks on civilians presents a clear and present need. No other funding source can expeditiously address the non-humanitarian and non-military needs. A number of USAID partners on the ground in CAR have put forward unsolicited proposals to respond to the deteriorating conditions. While most of those organizations have until now been focused primarily on humanitarian programs, the current need for peace-building and conflict mitigation programming is outside the mandate of standard humanitarian assistance (IDA) and requires the use of other resources. Responding to the situation in CAR requires the full suite of DCHA tools, and the flexibility of CCF is needed to ensure that a complex response is not hampered by the narrow requirements of other accounts.

Effective management with a tangible impact

The continued closure of the US Embassy in Bangui and the related DS restrictions on US personnel from entering CAR pose a significant management challenge for USAID, as does the limited capacity of USAID's East Africa Mission (AFR/EA) to manage additional programs. However, the urgency of the situation requires a response that adequately works around those challenges in the short-term and can be transitioned to the regional Mission as soon as possible. To that end, DCHA/OCR will deploy a capable member of its "Firehouse" roster to coordinate USAID's CCF-funded response in CAR, serve as the interim AOR for the direct grants issued in Washington, and ensure that these activities sync with and complement other USAID and non-USAID funded activities. This individual will manage the initial USAID response until the time when USAID's East Africa Mission (AFR/EA) has the requisite management capacity in place to oversee these awards (they are expecting to hire a PSC for this purpose by April 2014). The OCR team member will be based in Nairobi as part of the AFR/EA Mission.

In terms of mechanisms, USAID will use three complementary approaches for supporting the CCF-supported response:

- **Cooperative Agreements:** DCHA's representatives in OAA will rapidly issue two cooperative agreements to USAID partners already on the ground (Mercy Corps and Search for Common Ground), responding to unsolicited proposals that they have submitted. The OCR-deployed individual will be the interim AOR for these grants until EA can hire a more permanent staff member to act in this role.
- **Modification of the Existing Program:** EA is currently funding Catholic Relief Services (CRS) as part of a counter-LRA program in southeastern CAR known as the *Secured, Empowered and Connected Communities* (SECC). While that program uses CT funding that cannot be repurposed, the award will be modified and augmented with CCF-funds to allow for CRS to expand its programming into other parts of CAR and build off the SECC methodology to help address the non-LRA related violence in CAR.
- **Rapid Response Fund:** CCF will also have a set-aside of funds in DCHA/PPM to allow flexible support to address other priority activities that may not be covered within the direct awards or program modification or that may arise. Decisions regarding the use of this funding will go through a review committee comprised of a member of the DCHA/PPM and EA staff, including the AOR (either the short-term OCR team member or the long-term PSC), who will review opportunities on a rolling basis, including potential additional grants, additional staffing support, etc. In general, any additional grants would support but are not limited to local indigenous groups; cooperatives; associations; informal groups; NGOs; and private voluntary organizations

(PVOs). This mechanism will allow for a flexible, rapid response capability given a fluid and evolving situation.

Mercy Corps, Search for Common Ground, and Catholic Relief Services already actively coordinate and in some cases work together in CAR. Lines of effort among the partners, as well as other USAID partners in CAR and the international community, will be clearly coordinated to avoid duplication and maximize impact. AFR/EA and USAID/W will communicate and work closely with partners over the course of the programming.

CCF is an appropriate resource and addresses a critical gap

CAR presents just the type of complex crisis that the CCF was designed to address: an emerging, unanticipated need with significant implications for USG interests. Despite surging amounts of interagency attention, the needs are greater and more urgent than can be met with standard funding sources.

2. *Project objectives and activities*

Across the various components that are being funded, all will contribute to the following objectives:

Objective 1: Strengthen local leaders' messaging on peace, tolerance, and non-violence. Bolstering peace messaging can be an effective violence mitigation option in an active conflict situation like CAR, where high levels of insecurity and displacement limit opportunities to bring groups of people together physically and where ordinary citizens are engaging in violence. The fact that conflict along religious lines has not marked CAR's history provides a basis to believe that messages of tolerance from influential local leaders can counter the forces promoting violence. To be effective, peace messaging efforts must be crafted and led by locals, embedded into broader peace initiatives, and conducted in a way that strengthens the role of community peace leaders and does not pose unwanted risks. Religious and other local leaders have been vocal advocates of peace in CAR, but there is need for expanding their reach and impact.

Theory of change: If local leaders' non-violent messages are reinforced and disseminated more broadly, then "ordinary" citizens will be more motivated to resist calls to violence.

Objective 2: Strengthen local peacebuilding initiatives to foster a renewed sense of security, peaceful inter-group relations, and a foundation for rebuilding social cohesion. The collapse of national authority and incidents of extreme violence have shattered local communities that had previously been largely peaceful. As a result, there is a need to support local peace leaders to re-establish a sense of security, develop capacity to manage newly polarized relationships, and lay a foundation for rebuilding social cohesion. In the immediate term context of fear and decimated livelihoods, tangible incentives (e.g., cash-for-work) can be an important part of restoring a sense of security, creating space for constructive community-building, and providing hope for the future.

Theory of change: If local peace and community-building initiatives are strengthened, then they can help people feel more secure and in control of their lives, mitigate the polarization created by the violence, and help communities lay a foundation for social reconciliation.

Objective 3: Improve access to timely and accurate public information. Accurate, up-to-date information about the security situation and assistance activities is severely lacking in CAR, allowing rumors to flourish. Combined with fear of violent attacks, rumors can lead to large-scale displacement and violent mobilization in anticipation of possible attacks. This information-action dynamic can be counteracted by expanding the availability of timely and accurate information. While activities in this

domain are related to those focused on peace messaging, these do not necessarily rely on changing individual attitudes.

Theory of change: If accurate information is more widely accessible, rumors will be less likely to spur displacement and violence and security for communities will be enhanced.

Below are the specific objectives and activities of components one and two.

Component One: Mercy Corp Project – Stabilizing Vulnerable Communities in the Central African Republic through the Promotion of Interfaith Dialogue and Economic Cooperation (SVC).

Goal and Purpose:

The goal of SVC is to help community leaders of all faiths work together to peacefully manage tensions and rebuild community cohesion in Bangui and Bouar. Mercy Corps will work with key traditional and non-traditional authorities, community leaders and religious heads - such as sous-prefects, mayors, village chiefs, women's associations, youth groups, IDPs, elders, and religious leaders - to support their efforts to act and advocate for peace. These leaders will be trained in dispute resolution methods and facilitation techniques to help them address problems and differences within their communities and provide constructive means to overcome divides.

Objectives and Activities:

Objective 1: Community leaders of all faiths will have enhanced capacity to resolve inter-communal disputes peacefully. Joint training and mentoring for key community leaders of all faiths in dispute resolution and multi-stakeholder dialogues.

Theory of Change: If Muslim and Christian leaders are provided with training and opportunities, then they will be able to peacefully resolve conflicts and reduce violence in their areas. Violence destroys trust and disrupts relationships. Mercy Corps will help local actors restart dialogue and rebuild trust by strengthening their negotiation and reconciliation skills and by providing a safe, neutral space for former adversaries to begin dialogue. Mercy Corps will work with community leaders of all faiths to bolster their ability to act as mediators for peace. As fair arbiters of disputes, they can serve as a bridge between people who have been placed in positions of opposition as a result of the fighting.

- 1.1: Prepare training material for negotiation and dispute resolution workshops.
- 1.2: Select workshop participants: Participants will include religious, formal, traditional and community leaders (such as heads of women's NGOs).
- 1.3: Train community leaders in dispute resolution and multi-stakeholder dialogue processes.
- 1.4: Form inter-community Peace Committees (responsible for managing disputes in their areas).

Objective 2: Muslim-Christian Communities are better able to work together. Work with communities to identify social and economic development activities designed to promote collaboration across religious lines.

Theory of Change: If people from divided communities work together to increase their economic opportunities, then they will be more inclined to work together positively on other issues. Conflict can lead to a winner-take-all mentality that destroys the trust and relationships necessary for business and

trade to flourish. When communities have been trapped in cycles of violence, it is difficult for them to imagine that cooperation with an adversary can benefit them. The project will look to build or rebuild trust and economic ties between communities that have been torn apart by violence. The aim will be to both raise the incentives for peace by showing that there is a tangible economic benefit to cooperation and, where possible, jump start local economic activity. In CAR, the security situation is highly unstable, which may necessitate delaying the start of economic activities until the environment becomes more conducive to these types of initiatives. If the start-up of economic projects becomes a challenge, Mercy Corps will immediately inform USAID and submit a revised work plan of activities for discussion and approval.

- 2.1: Organize community forums to solicit joint inter-community economic and social projects.
- 2.2: Identify and assess social and economic projects.
- 2.3: Identify and mobilize community members with financial, technical, vocational or business skills training to support economic and social projects.

Objective 3: Public attitudes towards tolerance and non-violence are positively changed. Strengthen traditional, community and religious leaders' messaging on the importance of peace and cooperation through inter-community dialogues in order to avoid future clashes based on religion. Training will include rumor busting mechanisms to prevent community reactions to false information that put lives at risk.

Theory of Change: If people see respected leaders speak out in favor of peace, then they will be less likely to view violence as a legitimate way to resolve differences. People tend to listen to a message if it comes from someone they know and respect. Research has also shown that outward modeling of certain behavior encourages others to act in a similar fashion. The effect is even more powerful if the behavior is promoted by an authority figure. Mercy Corps will elevate the voices of respected community and religious leaders as advocates for peace. During this period of increasing sectarian strife, Mercy Corps will promote a platform for alternative messages of non-violence, tolerance and cooperation. These counter-narratives will serve three purposes: 1) counteract messages of division and hate fomented by armed actors; 2) educate people on the basics of peacebuilding and reconciliation; 3) connect people to helpful resources and networks on which they can rely.

- 3.1: Peace Committees organize community dialogues on peacebuilding and inter-community relations.
- 3.2: Peace Committees work to resolve disputes in their communities.
- 3.3: Conduct weekly media outreach.

Component Two: Search for Common Ground Project – “Better Together” Supporting Community Empowerment and Non-Violence in the Central African Republic.

Goal and Purpose:

The goal of this project is to *reduce intercommunity violence and support an inclusive transition process in the Central African Republic*. To achieve this goal, SFCG activities will be concentrated in **Bangui, Bossangoa and Bangassou**: three major urban areas which have been hard hit by the violent crisis, are extremely polarized and where the current cycle of violent reprisals and hate could easily spark again and have serious consequences on the country as a whole if nothing is done to ease tensions and polarization. They are also strategic locations where an escalation – or de-escalation – of tensions,

improvements in communication, information access and inter-community collaboration will have significant positive repercussions on inter-community dynamics within the country at large.

Theory of Change: *If non-violent voices are reinforced and relationships between communities and individuals are restored, then the likelihood of violence will decrease.*

Objectives and Activities:

Objective 1: Supporting attitudes favorable to non-violence and intergroup collaboration

- 1.1: A non-violence campaign promotes tolerance in flashpoint communities with locally relevant messages.
- 1.2: Access to credible information is increased in flashpoint communities.

Objective 2: Reducing community tensions and establishing a permanent dialogue in flashpoint areas.

- 2.1: Local dispute resolution mechanisms are established within targeted communities.
- 2.2: A "peace architecture" linking community, government, security and international actors is established in target communities.

Objective 3: Strengthening the capacity of key non-state actors to foster dialogue and support a peaceful and inclusive transition.

- 3.1: The capacity by key media outlets in order to foster dialogue and support the transition process is increased.
- 3.2: Civil society coalitions have the capacity and vision to foster dialogue and support complex decision-making during the transition period.
- 3.3: Humanitarian actors have increased their capacity to implement conflict sensitivity programming.

3. Targeted groups, institutions and communities

The proposed programs focus on local leaders (religious and other), grass roots community members, and media actors (community radio stations, journalists). The initial geographic coverage would target communities who experienced high levels of violence, including Bangui, Bambari (Ouaka Prefecture), Nana-Mambéré prefecture, Bossangoa, and Bangassou. Geographic coverage would be reassessed on a rolling basis in light of the latest security situation, the severity of needs, implementing partners' capacities, and further assessment.

4. Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

An early 2014 USAID assessment team will assess viability and help refine further the above objectives, and funding and implementation will be adjusted as necessary with partners. While the reopening of the US Embassy Bangui might significantly improve USAID's ability to monitor these programs, USAID will assume that the Embassy will remain closed for the foreseeable future. Based on that assumption, USAID would provide significant TDY support via AFR/EA and USAID/W. The implementing partner will submit an M&E plan with the annual work plan. The M&E plan will be approved at the same time and with a similar approval process as the annual work plan. The M&E plan will track progress toward indicators proposed by the implementing partner(s) and shall be updated and revised as needed in

collaboration with USAID. Technical supervision in the performance of this cooperative agreement will be provided by the designated Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR).

5. Funding priorities of multilateral donors and other USG assistance activities in CAR

The European Commission (ECHO) is the most significant donor in CAR outside of the USG, currently providing €20M to support the humanitarian response in sectors such as protection, WASH, and access to health services. ECHO has allocated funds for media assistance, mostly to PANOS (who is coordinating with Search, Internews' local partner and others via the Inter-operators Group in Bangui).

The USG is providing assistance through a number of other funding streams, including \$40 million of support for MISCA and \$30 million of humanitarian assistance in FY 2013 and FY 2014 to date, primarily through OFDA, FFP, and PRM. DCHA/DRG is conducting an expedited review of another unsolicited proposal from Internews Network to support community radios in CAR through its Human Rights Grants Program (HRGP). S/DRL is providing support to a discrete peace-building effort led by local religious leaders in CAR.

6. Implementation Plan:

The life of the project will be 12 months, from January, 2014 to January, 2015. The funding will be FY 2013 CCF Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) and \$4 million will be obligated in the first year, this represents the total estimated project cost.

The funds obligated under this project will come from DCHA/PPM, subject to the availability of funds. The funds will be obligated through two cooperative agreements. In addition to these obligations, \$1.5 million will be provided to USAID/EA to fund a modification to an existing award. Another \$180,000 will be obligated by DCHA/PPM for a Personal Services Contractor to be deployed to USAID/EA in Nairobi as the AOR for these two awards and to coordinate USAID efforts in CAR. In addition, \$320,000 in CCF/OCO will be held in DCHA/PPM as part of a "Rapid Response Fund". This "Rapid Response Fund" could be added to any of the four mentioned mechanisms or possibly through another identified mechanism as long as it fits the objectives approved for this funding. The total of all these items is \$6 million.

7. Summary of Cost Estimate

The budget for this project is \$6 million. The funds are entirely FY 2013 CCF/OCO from DCHA/PPM.

8. Sustainability (if appropriate) of the proposed project

USAID's current engagement in CAR is focused on preventing a further escalation of violence and the potential for large-scale and deliberate attacks against civilians. This proposal is designed to address urgent needs in the CAR. Unlike many other USAID engagements where the emphasis is on supporting a long-term transition out of a crisis, USAID/AFR has made it clear that CAR is unlikely be a long-term development priority. However, there is consensus among USAID and the interagency that there is a strategic and moral imperative to prevent further escalation of violence and widespread killing that threatens CAR in the near-term. The activities in this proposal represent efforts to stabilize the situation, identify and support resiliencies such as local peace-building efforts and inter-communal trust, and address the information vacuum that is exacerbating tensions. At the end of the project period, the same activities may or may not be appropriate given changes to the context. However, we strongly believe that this specific intervention during this period of acute risk is an important priority and should be considered regardless of the sustainability challenges.

9. Gender Analysis

A gender analysis was addressed by including appropriate expertise on the technical review of the Mercy Corps and Search for Common Ground projects. The SFCG project a particularly good job of addressing and incorporating Women, Peace and Security (WPS) in the application. The application includes both a specific elaboration of gender considerations, as well as including clarification within the methodology on the differential impact of conflict on women and men – and the roles that women can play in promoting non-violence.

SFCG included strong narrative as well as clear metrics, ensuring equal airtime to women and men in all public communications campaigns (radio and community-base), and at least 30% representation of women within training groups. SFCG not only captured the importance of numbers, but also of ensuring participation by women. SFCG facilitators and trainers are trained to ensure that women are not only “present” but participate and shape the discussions within workshops and dialogues.

The Mercy Corps application addressed concerns regarding the potential lack of a solid gender analysis. MC recognizes that peace building is not possible without the inclusion of women in a large part of the process. In order to ensure the participation of women in the decision making process, Mercy Corps has decided to include leaders of local women’s NGOs in the training programs. An effort will be made to include local women’s NGOs that are comprised of both Muslim and Christian faiths. These women only groups should have a representative that is willing to present the ideas of the group in the larger forum. Facilitators will need to ensure the participation of the women’s representative in the larger group. Where no representative for the group can be found, a formal response should be given to the facilitator to present in front of the larger group. During the participatory assessment at the beginning of the program women community leaders will be interviewed to identify barriers to participation in the community forum and education of peers. Questions will be on what types of needs they may have in relationship to safety and security, childcare and the time constraints that may come with being the family care-provider. Solutions to childcare issues could include setting up partnerships with local or international organizations who provide free child-friendly spaces. Meetings can be set up close to these spaces or other locations identified by female participants in the initial assessment.

10. Environmental Determination

The activity complies with the Agency’s environmental regulation per 22 CFR 216 and ADS 201.3.00.2.b. The CCF IEE for Search for Common Ground’s “Better Together: Supporting Community Empowerment and Non-Violence in Central African Republic” project was cleared by the DCHA Bureau Environment Officer (Erika Clesceri) on January 14, 2014 and is included as Attachment 1. The CCF IEE for Mercy Corps’ “Stabilizing Vulnerable Communities in the Central African Republic through the Promotion of Interfaith Dialogue and Economic Cooperation (SVC).” was cleared by the DCHA Bureau Environment Officer (Erika Clesceri) on January 17, 2014 and is included as Attachment 2.

11. Additional Considerations

While covered in the Activity and Country Checklist as well, it is important to note that while the Search for Common Ground activities could include a minimal number of members of security forces and/or members of government as participants, no USG funding will be provided to either members of security forces nor the government. For example, a minimal number of members of security forces nor the government may participate in activities involving local community leaders, religious leaders, members of youth groups, members of women’s organizations, etc., but they would not be reimbursed for any expenses they might incur in order to participate (i.e. travel, food, hotel, etc.)

12. Activity Checklist

Please see Activity Checklist-SFCG (Attachment 3)
Please see Activity Checklist-MC (Attachment 4)

13. Country Checklist

Please see Country Checklist (Attachment 5)

14. Budget

<i>Program Component</i>	<i>Budget</i>
Cooperative Agreement (Award to Mercy Corps)	\$2,000,000
Cooperative Agreement (Award to SFCG)	\$2,000,000
Modification of Existing Program (Additional \$1.5M for CRS' SECC program)	\$1,500,000
Rapid Response Fund (Managed by DCHA/PPM and AFR/EA)	\$320,000
Short-term Management Support (6 months of OCR supported TDY)	\$180,000
	\$6,000,000

**Memorandum of Understanding:
International NGOs Working Group on
Peacebuilding and Social Cohesion**

Among
**Catholic Relief Services,
Danish Refugee Council,
Mercy Corps, and
Search for Common Ground.**

Background:

The Central African Republic (CAR) has been in turmoil since rebels seized power in March 2013 with the country experiencing significant conflict and violence creating devastating consequences for men, women and children. Since September 2013 the country has plunged into sectarian violence involving not only armed groups, but also the civilian population. The segregation between communities based on religious affiliation has increased to unprecedented degrees leading people to flee to neighboring countries or displace internally to protect their lives.

Several organizations with a long-term commitment to working in the Central African Republic stepped up their efforts in social cohesion programming following a marked rise in violence in December 2013.

Broadly speaking, there is recognition that the upsurge in violence in CAR has deeply frayed the existing social fabric and efforts to rebuild social cohesion can be supported through well-constructed programs. Many of these programs aim to provide support to a broad range of community leaders to build their capacity to resolve inter-communal disputes peacefully; promote tolerance, peace and reconciliation; advance mechanisms for sharing and resolving grievances; and provide incentives to work together for mutual benefit. These social cohesion programs aim to promote attitudes of tolerance and non-violence by supporting inter-community peace messaging.

The current partners are committed to working in coordination with the CAR government's strategy for reconciliation. The government is widely acknowledged to be committed to social cohesion, as seen by the appointment of a Minister of Communication and Reconciliation. With the continued threat of violence throughout the country, the transitional government has been open to collaboration with INGOs in reinforcing social cohesion throughout the country.

It is recognized that, despite a shared commitment to social cohesion work, each partner organization has its own strengths, priorities, expertise and networks. For example, most INGOs are committed to working in specific geographic areas and have their own institutional funding mechanisms and reporting requirements. Nevertheless, this document recognizes the need to build mechanisms for joint collaboration and mutual support in achieving social cohesion in CAR.

Preamble:

The aforementioned partners have established a partnership for the coordination and implementation of social cohesion programming in CAR.

Purpose:

The parties to this memorandum of understanding recognize that:

- Building more effective institutions requires working in collaboration with others.
- Resources are wasted when organizations constantly try to “reinvent the wheel.”
- Each organization has expertise and a comparative advantage that, together, can provide beneficiaries with improved services.
- Synergy is gained from working in a spirit of mutual benefit and cross-cultural understanding
- Strengthening civil society produces global benefits.
- Each partner organization shares a commitment to “people centered development.”

Scope of Agreement:

As a reflection of ongoing commitment to these shared endeavors, the parties wish to work together, although not exclusively, through:

Coordination & Cooperation

In recognition of the Purpose and Underpinning Principles of Understanding, the parties agree to:

- exchange and share relevant best practices, documentation, mapping, contacts, curricula and triangulation of information;
- as appropriate, develop common indicators of behavioral changes for targeted communities and beneficiaries;
- explore and develop potential areas of future collaboration, including joint programming and development of consortia eligible for funding grants and tenders;
- provide mutual support in areas of common interest, including joint promotion and publicity where applicable;
- establish a close working relationship on an equal partnership basis through regular formal and informal communication and activities; and
- Assist each other in networking with other relevant organizations.

Collaborative activities and common objectives

The parties agree to a decentralized coordination mechanism whereby an agency may take on a facilitating role, as agreed by member organizations.

- **Bi-weekly meetings and rotating member facilitation.** The responsibilities of the facilitating organization include convening bi-weekly meetings, solicitation of agenda points, chairing meetings, and follow-up on recommended action points. Minutes will be shared within 48 hours.
- **Institutional Coordination and Joint Action Plans.** In Bangui, as well as outside of the city, partners will engage to regularly coordinate and inform each other on pertinent events or other matters relevant to social cohesion programming and the development of joint action plans. In order to avoid any appearance of competition or rivalry between the parties, the working group will harmonize beneficiary per diems and other expenses in conformity with objective criteria. Partners will endeavor to share information in regards to evaluators, consultants and other experts.
- **Formalize relationship with the CAR Government.** When feasible, and if requested, partners will formalize its collaborative relationship with the CAR Government.

- **Joint training and curriculum development for alternative dispute resolution training.** Members will encourage joint training, mutual learning and best practices.
- **Transparent Interactions.** Partners will facilitate and share information with all member INGOs on contacts with national and local authorities, including mayors, *arrondissement and quartier* committees, access to platform and religious and other leaders.
- **Joint launch of advocacy initiatives.** Partners will collaborate to conceive *advocacy initiatives and* related messages to address challenges and generate support for social cohesion.
- **Collaborative intervention in times of crisis.** Partners will convene emergency meetings in the event of a crisis to ascertain necessary interventions.
- **Adherence with laws and customs.** The laws of the beneficiary countries are to be respected by all members of the partnership and by extension their local and non-local employees. There shall be respect for all religions and cultural values of the beneficiary communities.
- **Responsible Partnership.** It is understood through this MoU that all parties will take these articles seriously and will undertake immediate and unilateral action in case violations occur.
- **Collaboration in socioeconomic projects.** Partners working in similar geographic areas should attempt to pool resources whenever possible in order to broaden the impact of activities. Partners should jointly vet project proposals and, when possible, share information.
- **Use of Working Group for Referrals.** Partners should develop a methodology for making a referral which includes an assessment of the organization's status and capacity, as well as the project's feasibility.
- **Bi-yearly retreat on social cohesion.** Retreats will take place every 6 months of the Working Group members to reflect, discuss, assess and exchange information on social cohesion programs.

Underpinning Principles:

The partnership arrangements will protect the interests of the parties to this memorandum of understanding by:

- protecting the autonomy, community standing, reputation and branding of all partners;
- providing the potential to complement and build on partners' strengths;
- protecting the intellectual property of all parties;
- assuring equal visibility and participation of all parties;
- providing the opportunity for further program development, cooperation, and growth; and
- Ensuring the confidentiality of discussions and proposals until otherwise mutually agreed.

Composition of the Working Group. Organizations interested in becoming a part of the Working Group must be referred by a current member and must also present, either orally or in writing, their reason for wanting to join, their value added and agree to the principles outlined in this MOU. Finally, the group must consensually agree on allowing the organization to join the working group. Certain organizations may be invited as guests, in order to share knowledge or information to member organizations. Additionally, some organizations may be invited to join the Working Group based on mutual needs.

Dispute Resolution within the Working Group. In the event that a major dispute arises, which threatens the continuation of the partnership, parties agree to a negotiated or mediated resolution of the conflict ONLY within the Working Group space.