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FY16 Quarter 3 Report: April 1 – June 30, 2016

Program: Advancing Solutions for Peace through Intercommunity Reconciliation and Engagement (ASPIRE)

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A. Executive Summary

The goal of Advancing Solutions for Peace through Intercommunity Reconciliation and Engagement (ASPIRE) is to enable community leaders of all faiths and disaffected youth to work together to peacefully manage inter-group tensions, rebuild community cohesion and strengthen pluralism in the strategic town of Bouar. This will be achieved through a holistic people-to-people approach that: 1) facilitates inclusive, community-led processes to mitigate current and future conflicts; 2) increases economic cooperation across lines of division; and 3) positively changes attitudes towards tolerance and non-violence.

During the reporting period Mercy Corps continued to support and train peace committee members and peer educators. Mercy Corps also trained the community committees in the development and management of micro-projects (COGES-PC). In addition, Mercy Corps worked with the COGES-PC to identify intercommunity economic and social projects.

B. Program Overview

During the reporting period, Mercy Corps continued to work in collaboration with its partners including local authorities, major religious platforms, and local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and:

- held 2 tripartite meetings with the project team, the inter-religious platform of Bouar (PIRB in French) and the peace committees in Bouar and Niem to develop the strategies to adopt and resolve the intergroup conflicts identified during the March 2016 workshop;
- held bi-weekly meetings with the PIRB;
- monitored the activities to assess progress made;
- developed and trained 16 COGES-PC;
- supported the organization of 16 community fora to solicit ideas for community projects;
- trained 44 members of COGES PC in project development and management ;
- led 1,045 awareness raising sessions around 3 of the thematic of social cohesion;
- finalized five peace message and the script for the 9 radio show for the peace building radiophonic campaign.

C. Security

The security situation has remained relatively calm in Bouar during the reporting period. The situation on the axes has remained volatile. In these areas, security incidents perpetrated by various armed groups persist, including robberies, destruction of homes and murder, rape and torture continue to be regularly reported. Inter-community tensions also remained very high. In Kouï and Ngaoui areas the tensions forced populations to flee and find refuge in the forest or in neighboring Cameroon. Tensions and violent clashes were also reported on the Niem-Yelewa axe. In April, the program was forced to suspend its activities in the area for a week until the situation improved.

D. Performance Summary

Staff recruitment: The recruitment process for an international program manager is still ongoing. Mercy Corps recruited the assistant program manager from promotion within the project. Mercy Corps has also launched the recruitment process to replace the assistant program manager who resigned in mid-April. The officer is covering the interim project manager position with the support of the Bouar's Head of Office and another senior staff member, also based in Bouar. The Bangui office also sends monitoring staff regularly to assist. Several meetings were organized on 5, 12 and 14 April 2016 with



program staff and senior staff in Bouar to adjust the responsibilities and tasks to ensure that activities are covered, implemented and monitored during the recruitment process.

Objective 1: Facilitate inclusive, community-led processes to mitigate current and future conflicts

Activity 1.1. Form 10 Peace Committees comprised of community leaders, women, and youth, that meet regularly to review rising tensions and inter-group dispute resolutions, and discuss interventions.

During the reporting period Mercy Corps continued to work with the 16 peace committees established and trained during the earlier stage of the program.

The peace committees facilitated the resolution of three conflicts in the commune of Niem and the village of Kankan, located on the Bouar-Bozoum axe. The table below presents the details on the conflicts resolved.

Type of conflict	Trigger of the conflict	Location	People directly involved in the conflict	Other people involved in the conflict	Date the conflict was resolved	Key resolutions
Land dispute	Cows destroyed the land of a farmer	Nièm	A farmer and a pastoralist	A group of youth	12 June 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The pastoralist accepted to not bring cows near the field - payment of a compensation to the farmer - youth accepted to not steal the cow
Conflict of Interest	Unequal share of inheritance	Nièm	Step brothers	The uncles	10 June 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Divide the inheritance in equal part - Share the inheritance fairly
Domestic dispute	Adultery	Kankan	A husband and his wife's boyfriend	The wife	26 April 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The lover accepted to stop seeing the wife - The husband agreed to not keep knife at home and leave it at the chief's house.

Activity 1.2 Train Peace Committees in mediation, facilitation, dispute resolution, Do No Harm, and multi-stakeholder dialogue processes.

No training took place during the reporting period.

Activity 1.3 Facilitate Peace Committees in organizing awareness sessions for community members to promote peaceful resolution of inter-group disputes and inter-group dialogue.

During the reporting period, Mercy Corps held various meetings with the peace committees and the representatives of the interreligious platforms in Bouar.

Mercy Corps organized 6 meetings to reach all of the six peace committees working on the axes to assist them in developing their action plans to resolve the conflicts they had identified during the March workshops. All peace committees were able to finalize an action plan with the support of the program facilitators. Follow-up meetings were also organized to monitor progress made towards the action plans, identify shortcomings and provide support. These meetings were also an opportunity for the program facilitators to introduce the conflict resolution reporting tool developed after the March 2016 workshop.



On 7 June 2016, Mercy Corps organized a meeting with the four peace committees of Bouar and the representatives of the PIRB to review progress made on their action plans. In total, 19 people participated in this meeting, which included 10 women. The meeting showed that peace committees in Bouar had not made sufficient progress with their action plans and would require extra support/coaching from the facilitators to enhance their conflict resolution capacities to move forward with the implementation of their action plans.

The program team will organize refresher trainings in July 2016 for each of the peace committees of Bouar to enhance their competencies in mediation, facilitation and conflict resolution so that they become confident enough to lead the conflict resolution activities.

Activity 1.4 Establish an early warning system to identify rising tensions before they become flashpoint conflicts.

Mercy Corps could not implement this activity as planned during the period due to the delay in the recruitment of an expert consultant. After nearly two months, Mercy Corps has not been able to find an expert in early warning systems in country and is now looking to recruit an international consultant to lead the activity.

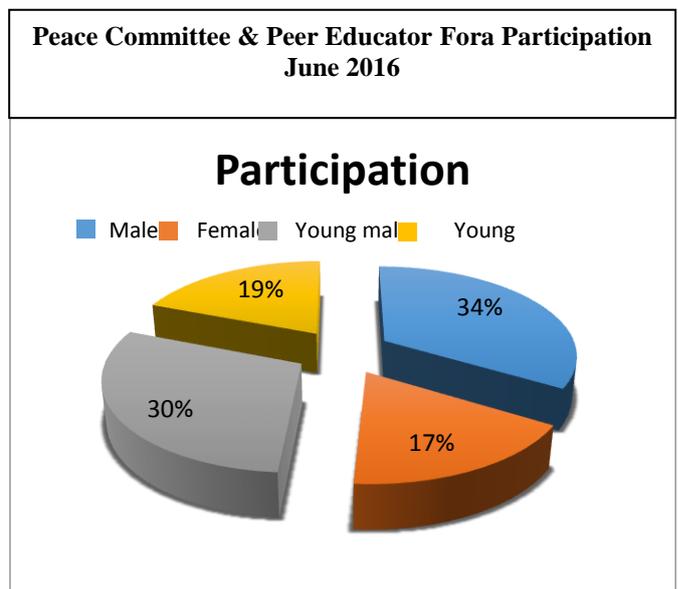
Objective 2: Increase economic cooperation across lines of division.

Activity 2.1 Peace Committees organize community fora in Bouar to solicit inter-group economic and social projects.

During the reporting period, Mercy Corps continued to work with partners to help set-up three additional committees for the management of micro projects (COGES-PC in French). Overall since the beginning of the program, Mercy Corps has supported the development of 16 COGES-PC; reaching a total of 144 members, including 48 women.

In June 2016, the peace committees and the peer educators organized 16 community fora to solicit inter-group economic and social projects. During these fora participants worked in groups to identify potential community projects that meet the program objectives and the criteria of selection including among other items, diversity of the project holders (Christians and Muslims), potential for the project to create employment and the inclusion of youth – please see attached document for reference to the criteria list.

Overall, 1,514 people participated in the forum; among which 553 women and 961 men. Youth represented almost half (49%) of the total of the participants. 94% of the total participants were Christians. The low representation of Muslims in certain districts of Bouar, which is divided into districts (where in some you do not find Muslims at all), in particular the 1, 2 and 3 districts and the distrust that remains between the communities, explain the low participation of Muslims in the fora. Mercy Corps is working with communities and partners to bridge the divide and build connections between these communities to promote peaceful coexistence.



The graph (above) and the table below present the details of participants involved in the fora.

Table 1: Participants in the fora

Locality	Participants per localization, sex and age				Total	Participants per religion		
	Male	Female	Young male	Young female		Christians	Muslims	Animists
Bouar	178	110	128	128	544	494	47	1
Axes	332	154	323	161	970	920	49	0
Total	510	264	451	289	1514	1414	96	1

Activity 2.2: Peace Committees transparently assess and select 20 social and economic projects.

Following the fora, Mercy Corps launched a call for proposal to all the COGES-PC. COGES PC submitted 32 projects most of which aimed to start small businesses, or agricultural activities.

A selection committee composed of members of the COGES-PC, representatives of the PIRB was set up to assess and select the social economic projects. The selection committee identified 20 projects after discussion in plenary.

Activity 2.3 Provide community members with training to build their financial, technical, vocational skills to ensure successful economic and social projects

From 8 to 10 June 2016, Mercy Corps organized training for project holders in development and management of microprojects in Bouar. In total, 44 people including 8 women, 36 male, 5 Muslims and 39 Christians participated in the training.

The results of the pre-test and post – training -showed that the training helped to build the capacities of the participants, especially in project design. Thus the proportion of participants that know the definition of a project increased from 42% before the training to 100% after the training. Similarly, the proportion of participants that understand the interest of community projects increased from 42% before the training to 100% after the training. The proportion of participants that know the features of a good project increased from 0 before the training to 90% after the training.

Objective 3: Positively change public attitudes towards tolerance and non-violence.

3.1 Local committees initiate conflict management and peacebuilding messaging campaign in Bouar that includes all groups

From April to June 2016, peer educators organized 1,045 awareness raising sessions in the community on conflict, conflict and the right of the minorities, and non-violence reaching a total of 22,141 people including 5,809 women, 11,228 youth and 5,044 men. Youth represented more than half (50.7%) of the total participants.

The table below presents the details of the participants in the sessions.

Table 2: Participants in the awareness raising sessions April – June 2016

Period	Number of sessions	Participation			
		Men	Women	youth	Total
April	341	1463	1911	3486	6860
May	358	1911	2224	3989	8124
June	346	1670	1674	3813	7157
Total	1045	5044	5809	11288	22141

Before conducting the awareness rising sessions, the peer educators received briefing by the facilitators on the peacebuilding messaging, the community outreach and educational techniques and on how to conduct group activities.

The communities showed great appreciation for the peacebuilding and conflict management messaging that they consider an opportunity to restore social cohesion and to move away from hatred.

3.2 Local committees participate in a national forum to share lessons learned and success.

No update this reporting period.

3.3 Outcome of the national forum communicated back to community members

No update this reporting period.

E. Monitoring & Evaluation

Overall over the reporting period the program team conducted 360 monitoring visit to follow-up on activities implemented by the peer educators and the peace committees. The program team participated in:

- Joint field mission to Niem on 27 May 2016. Mercy Corps and the PIRB went to Niem to assess the feasibility of an inter-community dialogue to resolve a conflict between farmers and pastoralists. During the mission, Mercy Corps and PIRB met with the two conflicting parties to better understand the conflict and assess the willingness of the two parties to engage in the intercommunity dialogue.
- Two follow-up missions were organized to meet with local authorities of Bouar and Niem to identify the key protagonists that should participate in this inter-community dialogue and to plan for the activity.
- The sixteen forum organized by the peer educators to solicit inter-group economic and social projects.

The program team took the opportunity of these visits to reinforce peace committees and peer educators' capacities in community outreach, conflict resolution, data collection and reporting.

From 13 to 19 May 2016, the M&E assistant of the program supported the Democracy International team¹ participated in the collection of qualitative data for a study they are conducting on the relations between religion, conflict and peace in Central Africa and Thailand, funded by USAID.

F. Conclusion and Upcoming Activities

Key challenges/issues

- Delay with the setting-up the early warning system.
 - MC will open the recruitment to international experts
- Capacity of Peer Educators to effectively lead community outreach activities and manage the data collection tools.
 - MC will organize refresher trainings for all peer educators and increase coaching.
- Peace committees' low appropriation of the inter-community dialogue techniques
 - MC will organize refresher trainings for all peace committee members and increase coaching.

Activities plan for upcoming quarter (FY16Q4)

- Complete the recruitment of an expert to lead the set-up of the early warning system;
- train community leaders in the early warning system;
- continue monitoring and support of the Peer Educators in their education sessions;
- develop a plan for monitoring and coaching of peace committees in conflict resolution and the organization of inter-community dialogue;
- continue the bi-weekly meetings with the Interreligious Platform in Bouar;
- finalize the selection and launch of up to 20 community projects; and,
- sign contract with radio (Siriri) for the peacebuilding radio campaign.

¹ <http://democracyinternational.com/about/>