The Humanitarian System in the Central African Republic:

A Time of Challenges

Enrica Picco and Thierry Vircoulon

December 2017

Notice to the reader

   The subtitle of this study, *The Humanitarian System in the Central African Republic: A Time of Challenges*, outlines the perspective in which it was commissioned and conceived. As the Central African Republic enters its fifth year of crisis, humanitarian needs are increasing and obstacles to the delivery of aid to the population is mounting. *The Humanitarian System in the Central African Republic* invites humanitarian actors to position themselves as agents of profound change.

   To that end, this study takes the form of a self-critique. Based on an analysis of the security, legal, political and financial environments, the logistics and the human resources of the humanitarian system in the Central African Republic, it analyzes several problems and dysfunctions. At the same time, it highlights good practices, the pragmatic adaptive management strategies of humanitarian actors on the ground use daily to overcome problems to accomplish their mission. The study outlines 55 recommendations addressed to all the actors involved in humanitarian assistance, within-country and without, to review, improve and reinforce their practices.

   This study is based on a broad conception of the humanitarian system. Thus, international and national non-governmental organizations, UN agencies, MINUSCA, political actors, donors, religious structures, inter alia, were all consulted and participated in the construction of this analysis. They all have a role to play to implement these recommendations and to improve the delivery of humanitarian aid. Moreover, this analysis is a case study that is not only addressed to the actors involved in the Central African Republic. By pointing out structural challenges that affect the entire humanitarian system, it aims to constitute starting point of reflection for all those who strive to assist conflict-affected populations in protracted crisis situations, from Syria to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

   In that way, we invite you to use this document as a genuine working tool which will contribute to create a virtuous cycle between humanitarian interventions and reduction of conflict dynamics.

List of Acronyms

ACF	Action against Hunger
ACTED	Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development
ART	Regulation Agency for Telecommunication
CAR	Central African Republic
CCIO	Consultative Committee between Organizations
CCO	Coordination Committee for NGOs
CIONGCA	Council for national NGO of the Central African Republic
CMCoord	Civil/Military Coordination
COOPI	International Cooperation
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
ECHO	Humanitarian aid and civil protection department of the European Commission
FACA	Central African Republic Armed Forces
FPRC	People Front for the Revival of the Central African Republic
FSI	Domestic Security Forces (Customs, Police and Gendarmerie)
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IMC	International Medical Corps
INGO	International Non Governmental Organization
INSO	International NGO Safety Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
JUPEDEC	United Youth for the Protection of the Environment and Community Development
LRA	Lord Resistance Army

MINUSCA	UN Multidimensional and Integrated Stabilization Mission for the Central African Republic
MSF	Doctors without Borders
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NFI	Non Food Items
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PU-AMI	First Emergency – International Medical Assistance
QIP	Quick Impact Project
RCPCA	National Plan for Early Recovery and Peace Consolidation of the Central African Republic
RRM	Rapid Response Mechanism
SMT	Senior Management Team
SPONG	Permanent Secretariat for NGOs
TOB	Temporary Operational Base
UN	United Nations
UNDSS	United Nations Department of Safety & Security
UNHAS	United Nations Humanitarian Air Service
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UPC	Unity for the Central African Republic
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Program
WHO	World Health Organization

Table of contents

Introduction

The humanitarian system in the Central African Republic (CAR) came under strong pressure in 2017. Two indicators reveal the severity of this pressure: First, between January and September 2017, there were an astounding 265 security incidents involving NGOs[1] in which 13 humanitarian workers lost their lives. For comparison, 12 humanitarian workers were killed in 2014 at the height of an ongoing crisis. Second, some humanitarian organizations were forced to suspend their activities and even withdraw from certain towns (Bangassou, Batangafo, etc.). In 2017, the reduction in humanitarian access and the major increase in challenges to humanitarian organizations' routines raised questions about the prospects for the future of humanitarian aid in the CAR.

One of the first responses to this pressure was to examine the dynamics of the CAR crisis to try to identify what had changed in 2017. After the acute post-coup phase marked by unprecedented intercommunal violence (2013-2014), preparation of the elections (2015) and the illusion of a return to stability (2016), the conflict changed and became more entrenched. Despite the presence of a legitimate government supported by the international community and mediation efforts in Bangui, the government and the armed groups were unable to reach a peace agreement. The armed groups fragmented and proliferated (from 10 to 15 armed groups between 2015 and 2017) and are increasingly without a chain of command. Their growth was measured by their active presence in 14 of the country's 16 prefectures, and by the rapid failure of attempts made by the transitional and current government to redeploy representatives of the state in the interior. Redeployed officials were quickly returned to Bangui for security reasons.

Following the "bunkerization" of Bambari by MINUSCA and the withdrawal of American and Ugandan forces engaged in the fight against the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), the armed groups set the southeast – previously a relatively calm region – ablaze. New self-defense groups were created in the east and southeast in areas where anti-Balaka militias did not previously exist. This expansion of the anti-Balaka movement revealed the extent of the intercommunal conflict. It is particularly important to understand the impact of this on restrictions to humanitarian access and the pressure placed on NGOs by communities and armed groups. Attacks by armed groups against each other and against the civilian population have resumed in some areas with an intensity and ferocity that is reminiscent of the start of the crisis, back in 2013.

The new geography of the conflict contributes to the ongoing issue of humanitarian access. At the end of 2013, the conflict swept through western CAR before reaching the capital, Bangui, and trapping fleeing Muslim communities in enclaves. In 2017, the conflict's center of gravity moved to less accessible areas in the east and middle of the country.

Faced with these developments in the conflict, the UN peacekeeping mission (MINUSCA), deployed to the country in September 2014. For the first time in MINUSCA's history, several

---

[1] Two other humanitarian workers were killed during and after the consultants' visit: on 4 November, an ICRC employee was killed (https://www.icrc.org/en/document/central-african-republic-icrc-condemns-killing-staff-member); on 7 December, an employee of the NGO INTERSOS was killed (http://rjdh.org/centrafrique-un-personnel-humanitaire-de-long-internationale-intersos-tue-a-kabo-au-nord-du-pays/).

peacekeepers were lost in an ambush[2] and MINUSCA was unable to reestablish the political and military initiative. Following the proliferation of clashes throughout almost the entire country, the number of displaced people in the CAR recently reached the record figure of 1.1 million. [3] MINUSCA's new mandate, approved by the Security Council in November 2017, included emergency measures to deal with this extreme situation: deployment of an additional 900 peacekeepers with the priority of protecting civilians and promoting a more concerted political dialogue.[4]

Fig.1. Refugees and IDP, UNHCR, 31 October 2017: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/60813.pdf

Under the pressure of a constantly changing situation, donors, NGOs and UN agencies have tried to adapt their presence and operations accordingly. Before 2013, the CAR was hit by a long crisis that was complex for donors because it required a mixture of emergency humanitarian and recovery aid. Consequently, the country did not mobilise sufficient funding to respond to both humanitarian crises and structural needs.[5] Following the arrival of relief organizations at the end of 2013 and the start of 2014, the situation began to change and the presence of international NGOs in the country gradually increased. Since 2013, international actors have developed remarkable expertise in adapting to the

---

[2] "En Centrafrique, les casques bleus sont devenus des cibles", Le Figaro, 26 July 2017.

[3] "UNHCR warns CAR displacement at record high, funding among lowest anywhere", UNHCR, 15 September 2017. http://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2017/9/59bb9c2d4/unhcr-warns-car-displacement-record-high-funding-among-lowest-anywhere.html

[4] "Unanimously Adopting Resolution 2387 (2017) Security Council Extends Mandate, Increases Troop Levels of Stabilization Mission in Central African Republic", United Nations, 15 November 2017. https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/sc13068.doc.htm

[5] "Central African Republic: a State of Silent Crisis", Médecins Sans Frontières, novembre 2011. http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/sites/usa/files/A%20State%20of%20Silent%20Crisis%20EN.pdf

security and logistical constraints posed by this immense country, deprived of infrastructure and plagued by armed groups. However, changes in the context since the end of 2016 posed many strategic challenges involving security, legal frameworks, governance, funding, and logistics and human resources.
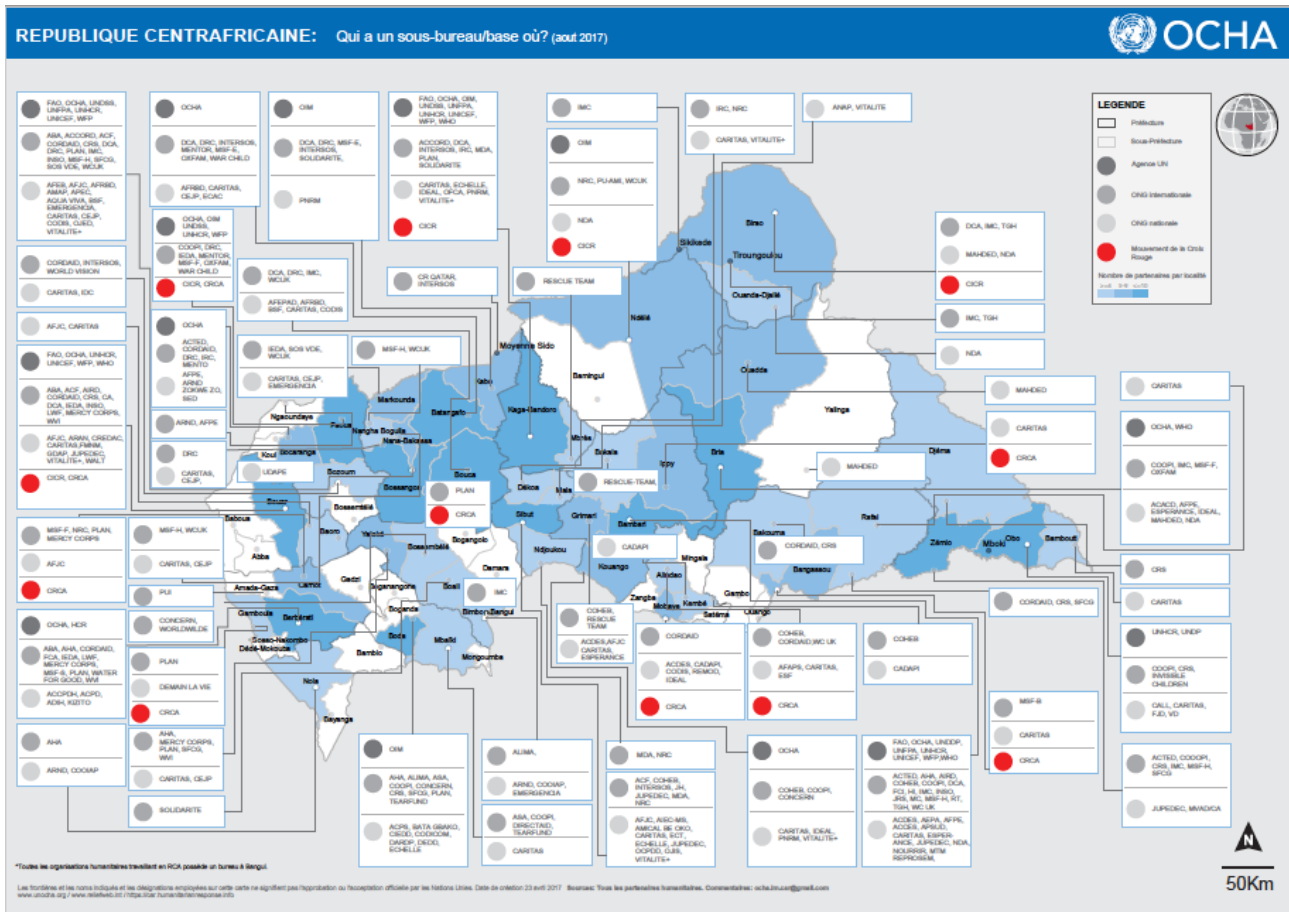

Fig. 2. NGO presence, OCHA, August 2017: https://reliefweb.int/map/central-african-republic/r-publique-centrafricaine-qui-un-sous-bureaubase-o-novembre-2017

This report describes the current state of play regarding the situation of international NGOs in the CAR at a time when the country is entering its fifth year of crisis and challenges are accumulating. It explains the changes to the political and military context that have created the present situation, analyzes the many challenges that humanitarian workers face on a daily basis and identifies the main barriers to humanitarian access and the opportunities for overcoming them.

After giving an overview of the dynamics and trends relating to current security constraints faced by NGOs, the report focuses on the changing relations between humanitarian workers, on the one hand, and armed groups, national authorities and civil society organizations on the other. It also analyzes the difficulties of maintaining humanitarian standards and principles in the context of the increasingly overlapping mandates of political, military and humanitarian interventions. An analysis of the legal and funding framework and of logistical constraints completes the picture, underlining the potential impact of the new law on NGOs and the impact of changes in donor strategies on the operations of humanitarian organizations.

Methodology

Commissioned by the International NGO Coordination Committee (CCO) and Mercy Corps, this report was written between October and December 2017 by two international consultants, Enrica Picco and Thierry Vircoulon. The report is based on an analysis of the available literature and documentation about the CAR's context and humanitarian situation since the start of the crisis in 2013, including documents produced by the United Nations and various NGOs. This analysis was complemented by a two-week field research visit to Bangui and Bria (Haute-Kotto) between October 28 and November 11, 2017. During this visit, the consultants conducted 55 semi-structured interviews with representatives of international NGOs (18), national NGOs (6), donors (7), United Nations agencies and MINUSCA (11), national authorities (2), armed group leaders (4) and other actors (7) whose views are important for a proper understanding of the country's current situation. Bria was the town chosen for a case study surveying the humanitarian system in action. The town has acute humanitarian needs, has repeatedly faced violence that has forced NGOs to take a range of security measures including evacuation, is controlled by several antagonistic militia, and is the location of a MINUSCA base.

Report writing was preceded by a workshop on October 11-12, 2017 on methods of delivering humanitarian aid in the CAR. This was organized by the CCO with the support of Mercy Corps. This workshop set out to formulate short-term operational recommendations in the context of a reduction in humanitarian access. It was a collective exercise in identifying innovative and creative approaches to crises and was attended by members of about 30 NGOs and a few donor representatives. There were two stages to the workshop: identification of the main problems hindering the routine activities of NGOs, and identification of consensual responses to these problems.[6]

The authors would like to thank all those who assisted with the research for making themselves available and for contributing to this report. By sharing their ideas and views, they demonstrated their trust and their commitment to improving the situation. The authors would particularly like to express their warm thanks to members of the CCO and Mercy Corps in Bangui as well as International Medical Corps, who all made it possible for us to travel to Bria and conduct our research there.

---

[6] Thierry Vircoulon, "Compte-rendu de l'atelier du Comité de Coordination des Organizations Non-Gouvernementales Internationales en Centrafrique (CCO), 11 et 12 octobre 2017", CCO, November 2017.

1. The Security Environment: The rise of insecurity and its causes

Nobody knows how many security incidents there have been in the CAR since Seleka combatants began to occupy towns in the northeast of the country in December 2012: in 2012-2013, no organization had the structure nor the capacity to record and classify attacks. It is therefore extremely difficult to estimate the number of thefts, robberies and looting incidents suffered by NGOs, the government, or religious and civil society organizations. Doctors Without Borders (MSF), one of the biggest organizations in the country before the crisis, estimates its losses at about €1 million during the coup.[7] It was only in 2014 that a comprehensive system for collecting and analyzing security incidents was put in place, and it will take years to refine coordination mechanisms to ensure they cover the whole territory.

This section concentrates first on analyzing the data on incidents against NGOs and explains the main trends in terms of the number and type of incidents as well as their impact on operations. It will look at issues around coordination mechanisms and advocacy messages, as these were often raised during the interviews we conducted. The section will go on to analyze relations between NGOs and armed groups, identifying how they have changed over the years and their impact on operations.

1.1 Current Situation: What are our relations with armed groups?

The figures on security incidents are both revealing and misleading, as is often the case in the CAR and elsewhere. If we examine the data collected by INSO, an international NGO that has established itself as a leader in the field of security information and analysis of NGOs in the country, there is an upward trend since 2015. The number of incidents rose from 3,216 in 2015 to 3,745 in 2016 and 2,954 during the first eight months of 2017.[8] The number of incidents targeting NGOs was 341, 365 and 232 respectively. Although INSO classified the great majority (91%) of attacks against NGOs as "not serious" in both 2016 and 2017, the number of CAR nationals among NGO staff killed has increased from five in 2016 to 13 in August 2017.

---

[7] « République Centrafricaine : un pays abandonné à son sort ? », Doctors Without Borders, July 2013. https://www.msf.fr/sites/www.msf.fr/files/car_rapport_fr_09072013.pdf
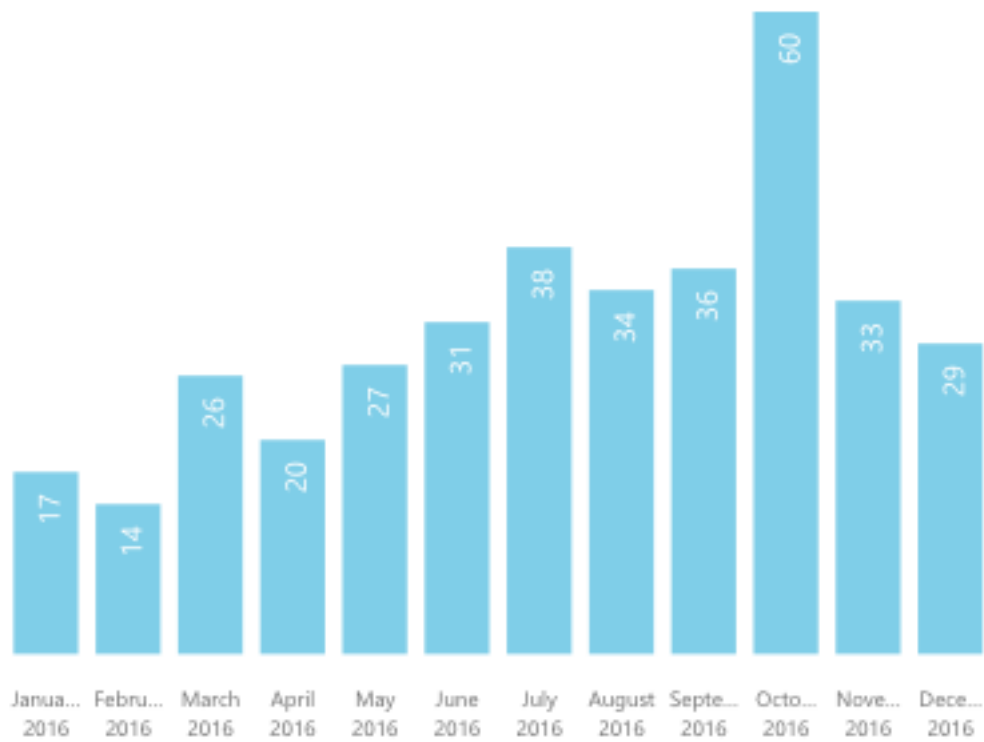[8] « Key Data Dashboard », INSO, 15 November 2017. http://ngosafety.org/keydata-dashboard/

Fig.3. NGO incidents 2016, INSO, October 2017: http://www.ngosafety.org/keydata-dashboard/

Fig.4. NGO incidents 2016, INSO, October 2017: http://www.ngosafety.org/keydata-dashboard/
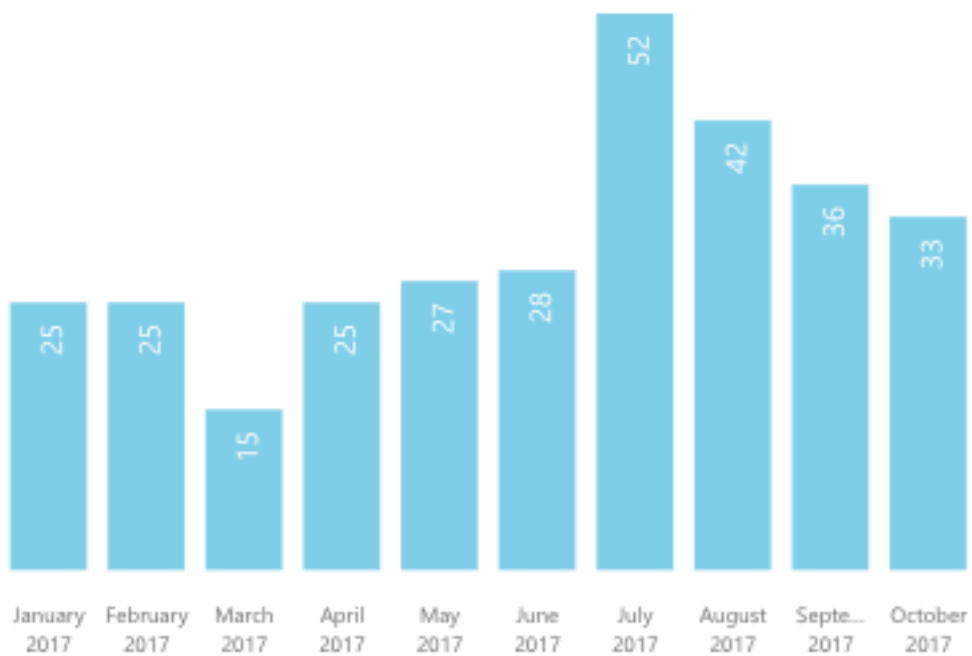
Consequently, an initial examination shows that a year generally considered to have been stable, such as 2016, recorded more incidents than in 2015, when insecurity prevailed everywhere in the country and the capital Bangui was the scene of violence for weeks.[9] Paradoxically, the number of incidents reported in 2016 could be even higher than in 2017, when most organizations experienced an increase in the number of incidents. If we include the small amount of information available on the start of the conflict, the picture becomes even more complicated. For example, between December 2012 and April 2014, MSF recorded 127 attacks on its premises, on both staff and patients,[10] which accounts for about a third of the number of attacks suffered by all international organizations in each of the years that followed.

These statistics show the limits of a purely quantitative analysis. They can be used to suggest security trends only if they are correlated with other indicators, such as the number of organizations in the country; the number and location of their staff, national and international; the number and type of road journeys; and their geographical distribution. This data is extremely difficult to collect and compile and is, at best, only analyzed internally by the NGO affected by the incident.

Recommendations to improve understanding of the security context

✦   Improve understanding of security dynamics by adding more indicators to the data collected by INSO and NGOs, notably the number of organizations in the interior of the country; the number and location of their staff, national and international; the number and type of road journeys undertaken, and their geographical distribution.

✦Formulate scenarios on the development of the security context over the forthcoming six to twelve months and update them at least every three months.

The qualitative data gathered in the interviews conducted for this report raised issues that could help to improve understanding of the generalized insecurity felt by NGOs in the country, which the United Nations Secretary-General has described as one of the most dangerous in the world for humanitarian workers.[11] There is a consensus that the premises and resources of international organizations are the last remaining resources in the provinces. In some provincial towns, all businesses have closed and their employees fled a long time ago. The formal economy is limited to international NGOs, which are the only organizations providing jobs, purchasing goods (cars, accommodation) and managing significant sums of money. Consequently, most incidents are categorized as criminal and opportunist and carried out purely for the gain of the person or group responsible for the incident. Even though this incident category does not seem to be motivated by deeper causes, attacks are often facilitated by information communicated to the attackers by the NGO's national staff: sufficient understanding and personal and community perception of humanitarian principles therefore also represent important factors in opportunist incidents.

---

[9] « La Centrafrique connaît un nouvel accès de violences interreligieuses », Le Monde, 29 September 2015. http://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2015/09/29/la-centrafrique-au-bord-du-gouffre_4776117_3212.html
[10] « Analyze de l'impact, de l'adaptation aux risques et de la réponse aux besoins en République centrafricaine », Doctors Without Borders, July 2014.
[11] One of the World's Most Dangerous Places For Aid Workers », Inter Press Service, 19 October 2017. http://www.ipsnews.net/2017/10/one-worlds-dangerous-piaces-aid-workers/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=one-worlds-dangerous-piaces-aid-workers

Alongside flagrant cases of criminal activity, another type of incident has become increasingly common: attacks suspected of being related to or motivated by NGO activities and the management of their human resources; notably, the type and quality of services provided, the categories of beneficiaries, and the management of administrative relations with national staff. This type of incident has evidently a greater impact on NGO managers because it affects the *raison d'être* of humanitarian organizations. On this issue, several interviewees highlighted the absence in the CAR of a practice that is common elsewhere, which is to conduct a survey of national staff to obtain a clearer picture of the ethnic and religious composition of the workforce and their possible support for armed actors. This could help NGOs to adapt their recruitment to the context of the area of their intervention and strengthen their security system.

When these factors come into play, several NGOs are often targeted at the same time, such as in Kaga Bandoro, Batangafo, and Bocaranga, to mention the most recent incidents. These are collective incidents, which were unusual in the first years of the conflict, and which surely contributed to provoking discussion about the anti-NGO sentiment that seems to be spreading throughout the country. Another recent trend has also contributed to this gradual reduction of humanitarian space, namely attacks against health premises. These incidents are all the more serious if we consider that the population is used to finding refuge in hospitals to avoid the fighting. By attacking health centers, armed groups violate one of the few places where the most vulnerable people can still feel safe. In 2017, these attacks claimed many victims, including health care staff and patients, particularly during incidents in Bangassou,[12] Zemio,[13] Gambo[14] and Batangafo.[15]

Recommendations to improve NGO preparation for security risks

✦ Conduct a survey of the ethnic and religious composition of NGO staff with the intention of adapting recruitment to the circumstances in intervention zones.

✦ Produce an NGO/UN/MINUSCA security tree in each sensitive zone.

✦ Appoint an international security manager in each NGO.

✦ Continue to train NGO national staff on humanitarian principles.

There is a general feeling that targeted NGOs do not give sufficient attention to the category of incidents related to NGO activities and management, especially as a group. A more detailed analysis would help to identify trends and eventually develop indicators that could be used to activate preventive measures. Some organizations (notably MSF and the ICRC) have enough institutional capacity, both on the ground and at their head offices, to conduct post-incident evaluations. Others,

---

[12] « Central African Republic: Unacceptable violence in Bangassou », Doctors Without Borders, 26 May 2017. hospitalhttp://www.msf.org/en/article/central-african-republic-unacceptable-violence-bangassou-hospital

[13] « Central African Republic: Baby brutally killed at a hospital », Doctors Without Borders 12 July 2017. http://www.msf.org/en/article/central-african-republic-brutal-end-short-life-killing-baby-hospital-cars-east

[14] « Central African Republic: International Red Cross Movement strongly condemns killing of Red Cross volunteers », International Committee of the Red Cross, 9 August 2017. https://www.icrc.org/en/document/central-african-republic-international-red-cross-movement-strongly-condemns-killing-red

[15] « Centrafrique : au moins six morts, 28.000 personnes sans aide humanitaire à Batangafo », Africanews, 12 September 2017. http://fr.africanews.com/2017/09/12/centrafrique-huit-morts-28000-personnes-sans-aide-humanitaire-a-batangafo/

despite their operational capacity in the country, do not yet have such expertise; in fact, most NGOs do not have enough resources to conduct this kind of analysis. Additionally, these are often very sensitive issues that NGOs are reluctant to share due to the risk of soiling their international reputation. Incidents may be due to flawed implementation of programs or the careless management of local staff. Learning lessons from this type of incident and sharing them with other international organizations would involve pooling expertise to carry out investigations and require a readiness to publicly admit mistakes were made or bad practice existed in their organization. However, the benefits would outweigh the costs.
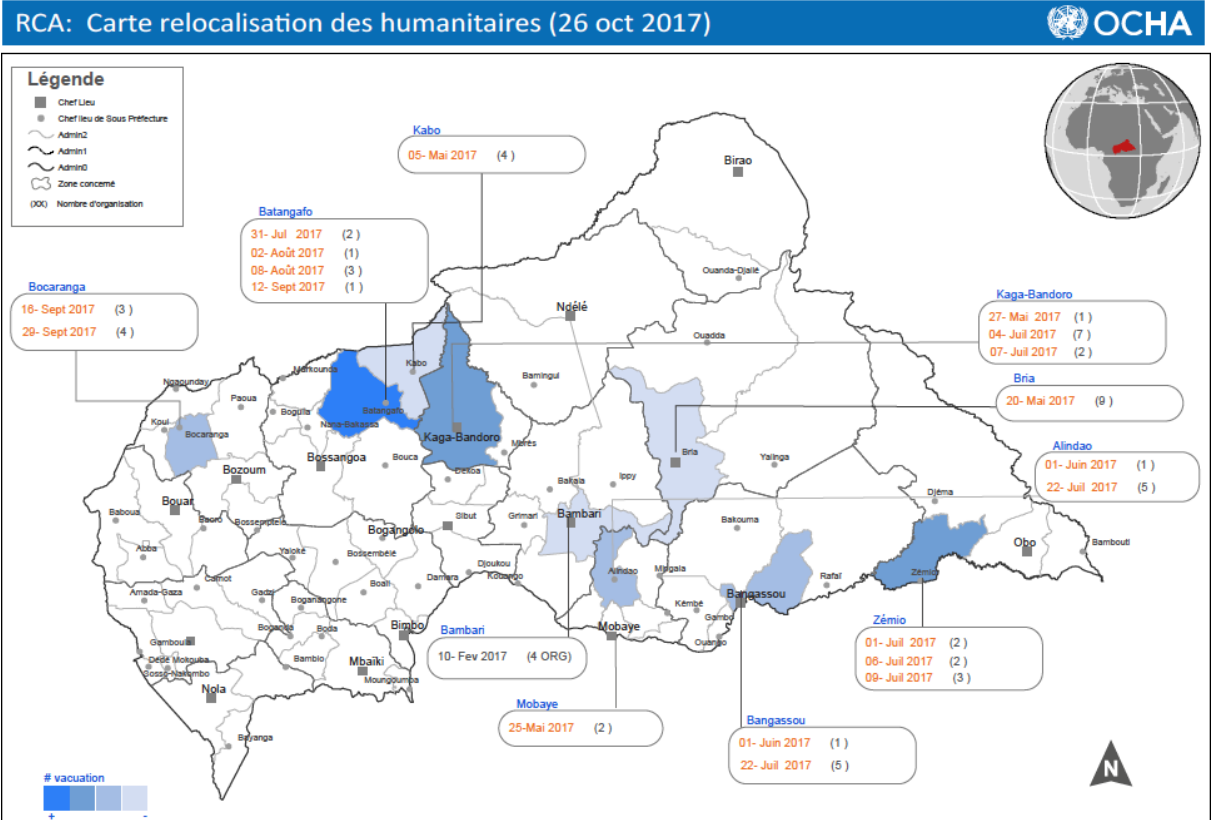
Fig.5. Relocation of humanitarian agencies, OCHA, October 2017

The impact of security incidents on NGO operations was never greater than over the course of the past year. Two indicators facilitate understanding of this phenomenon: the human and material losses suffered and the number of evacuations, and the partial suspension of programs. Despite the lack of consolidated data, there is a long list of these security risks since the end of 2016: incidents in Kaga Bandoro, Bria, Bangassou, Zemio, Batangafo, and Bocaranga (excluding, of course, the temporary suspensions following extremely violent incidents that did not reduce the operational capacity of organizations).

1.2 Adapting Our Practice

In the context of insecurity, it has become more common for groups of NGOs to move staff to a base that can be made secure by MINUSCA troops.[16] This is normally a temporary measure that allows centralized access to security information and facilitates decision-making when a town falls into the hands of armed groups. Although it has the advantage of reducing the threat to NGO staff and gaining time to decide on the convenience of evacuation, the creation of these bases also provokes concerns about the risk that abandoned premises will be looted, as well as about the perceptions of and respect for humanitarian principles. Finally, some interviewees highlighted the fact that NGOs are not in the habit of reporting thefts and robberies to national authorities. Even though the presence of security forces and judicial authorities is clearly limited in the interior of the country and incompetence and corruption are frequent, there is a question mark about this practice, which puts NGOs outside the law and does not raise the awareness of the CAR authorities about restrictions to humanitarian access or encourage them to do something about it.

Recommendations to improve the response to incidents

✦ Record the lessons learned from serious incidents and/or if an incident affects all NGOS. The results of the analysis should be shared with all organizations exposed to the same risks — on the basis of activity or geographical criteria — while ensuring great care is given to maintaining the confidentiality of sensitive information.

✦ Reinforce the practice of using assembly points in the event of a security risk.

✦ Strengthen internal communications channels between the field and the capital, especially in cases of collective incidents.

✦ Design a joint external communications strategy to respond to rumours disseminated among the local population as well as explain humanitarian principles and provide information about NGO activities.

✦ After evacuation to a location for security reasons, clearly state the conditions that would make possible a return and the resumption of activity by all the NGOs that are involved.

Paradoxically, the intensity of the conflict and the number of incidents in recent years have had a positive impact and have led to the improvement of information sharing and coordination mechanisms. Although several interviewees felt these mechanisms remain excessively centralized in the capital, the general perception of the accessibility and sharing of security information was positive. However, security remains an issue for international NGOs. National NGOs do not receive the warnings issued by UNDSS and INSO even though they are very exposed in the field.[17] Moreover, their attendance in some forums can lead others to withhold information because of concerns about information leaks (as they may support one or the other side in the conflict).

---

[16] See Chapter 2.
[17] Idem.

As a whole, international organizations in Bangui have the opportunity to share security information four times a week at meetings with the Security Cell (MINUSCA/UN/INSO/ICRC), the Security Management Team (SMT), and the Humanitarian Forum and the Civilian-Military Coordination (CMCoord, bimonthly). Nobody has deplored the risk of duplication. In particular, the CMCoord seems to have been strengthened by criticism it has received in the past. The small number of participants and the attendance of the MINUSCA Force Head of Operations ensures comprehensive information sharing. Nevertheless, the discussion would be much more open if representatives of the national security forces (FACA, police and gendarmerie) were not present. As with the national NGOs, their possible support for armed groups generates a lack of trust and hinders the sharing of security information.

Recommendations to improve coordination and communication systems

✦ Use specific communication system for communicating security information (joint channel handset, WhatsApp, Skype, etc.).

✦ Formulate a security information confidentiality protocol.

✦ Avoid the presence of national NGOs and members of the security forces at meetings held to discuss sensitive security information (for example, the Humanitarian Forum and the CMCoord) and create an early warning system (for example, a mailing list/or text messages) specifically for national NGOs.

1.3 Humanitarian access and relations with armed groups

"Humanitarian access is at risk in the Central African Republic",[18] say almost all press releases and advocacy notes issued since the start of the year by UN agencies and NGOs. The figures on security incidents mentioned above do not completely explain their alarm, because although there has been a steady increase in attacks, there has not been a massive increase. Although restrictions on access have recently become one of the main concerns of humanitarian organizations and donors, the reason must be sought elsewhere.

The development of the crisis and the security context can provide an initial explanation. The year 2014 saw most humanitarian actors concentrated in the capital. At the time, Bangui was the epicenter of the crisis and the first point of contact with the country for several NGOs that were starting work in the CAR. There were constant attacks but the concentration of the target population in an urban space increased the opportunities for access. However, humanitarian workers were not spared (massacre in Boguila, where a group of ex-Seleka killed 22 people, including three MSF employees,

---

[18] « L'accès humanitaire en péril en Centrafrique », OCHA, 4 May 2017. https://reliefweb.int/report/central-african-republic/l-acc-s-humanitaire-en-p-ril-en-centrafrique

who were meeting in the compound of the town's hospital).[19] In the following years, after NGOs had gradually extended their work to the interior of the country, the crisis developed into a low-intensity conflict punctuated by acute peaks of violence. The armed groups divided the country into zones of influence and humanitarian workers could count on relatively stable interlocutors. At the end of 2015 and the start of 2016, the wait-and-see stance adopted by the groups with regard to the inauguration of the new government led to a period of relative stability and encouraged several international organizations to plan a transition from emergency relief programs to recovery programs.

In 2017, the gradual fragmentation of armed groups and the extension of the conflict to the southeast forced NGOs into a radical change of strategy. The population groups in need of humanitarian aid were scattered across an enormous territory that was not well known and logistically difficult to access. Without having an established presence on the ground and without being able to rely on a network of contacts that could provide minimum security guarantees, many humanitarian actors began operations on shaky foundations and under considerable pressure from both the humanitarian coordination and donors. Meanwhile, NGOs started to come under attack at bases that had been established for years in areas they had been generally considered to be welcome. In these cases, issues about program quality, poor administration and the lack of appropriate communication with local communities formed an explosive cocktail to the detriment of humanitarian workers, who quickly learned that they could not take their welcome for granted and that they had to give constant attention to building a relationship with the local community.

At the same time that restrictions to access are the main operational constraint, they are also at the heart of advocacy messages for humanitarians. Some interviewees expressed concerns about this issue, emphasizing that the issue of gaining access to the populations in need of humanitarian aid could eventually provoke the perverse effect of encouraging donors to apply the principle of "no access, no money" and turn their backs on the crisis in the CAR, which would have devastating consequences for the country. NGOs should change their public discourse. Limitations on access could, for example, be presented as a growing challenge to which humanitarian organizations respond with limited resources. NGOs need to reformulate the message in a positive light by emphasizing that more financial resources might promote greater access.[20]

Recommendation to improve advocacy on humanitarian access
Review communications about the limitations to humanitarian access and make messages more positive. Limitations on access could, for example, be presented as a growing challenge to which humanitarian organizations respond with limited resources. NGOs need to reformulate the message in a positive light by emphasizing that more financial resources might promote greater access.

In any critique of current practices, engagement with the armed groups should be a priority. Although fragmentation of the groups and continuous evacuations hinder regular dialogue with armed combatants in the field, the general feeling is that NGOs should allocate more time and resources to

---

[19] « Central African Republic: three MSF workers among sixteen unarmed civilians killed at Boguila Hospital », Doctors Without Borders, 28 April 2014. http://www.msf.org/en/article/central-african-republic-three-msf-workers-among-sixteen-unarmed-civilians-killed-boguila

[20] See Chapter 4 and 5.

such contact. Some actors absolutely refuse to speak to representatives of the armed groups in order to preserve their impartiality. Others limit their contacts to group leaders on the grounds that this is enough to guarantee security despite the fact that many militias are only loosely structured and have no real chain of command. Moreover, several interviewees provided the analysis that the local dynamics of influence and power is inadequate, and the result is a failure to map actors that are key in ensuring access. The widespread lack of experience among international staff and the potential support of national staff for warring parties does not help to promote this type of analysis.[21]

The attitude of some other NGOs has changed in line with the gradual increase in the presence on the ground of MINUSCA and other security actors, such as the INSO. With the prospect of a gradual delegation of security management, these NGOS have progressively reduced their interactions with armed groups without assessing the serious consequences that this might entail. Nevertheless, relations are not always tense. The armed groups do not all pose the same security problems for NGOs. In regions that are under the firm control of a single well-structured group, leaders are generally willing to facilitate access to humanitarian workers and have regular contact with them. The case of Ndélé is typical: this northeastern town, an FPRC stronghold since the start of the crisis,[22] also represents a model for interaction between NGOs and armed actors and provides an example of the possible use of humanitarian aid by the groups themselves. In fact, the FPRC has shown on several occasions that it uses its good relations with NGOs as propaganda to show that it is perfectly capable of managing its territory in the absence of state authorities and can indeed do a better job of it. The opposite is the case in areas under the control of anti-Balaka groups that have a very weak internal structure.

Recommendations to improve engagement with the armed groups

✦ NGOs should invest in strategies for engagement with the armed groups with a view to recovering crucial expertise on guaranteeing humanitarian access to remote areas of the country. NGOs should: (1) conduct a mapping of armed actors in their area, including a curriculum vitae of the main leaders, their connections to local civil society and the history of their relations with NGOs; (2) regularly meet the main armed actors in their sector of activity to explain the organization's activities and answer questions; (3) regularly meet all members of the local civil society elite who might have influence over armed actors. To avoid the effects of turn-over, all this information and relations should be the object of a rigorous debriefing between outgoing and incoming project managers. Reports on local engagement activities should be shared with Bangui and head office to involve them in improving the strategy.

✦ Conduct joint NGO missions in sensitive areas when sharing different experiences and expertise may facilitate access.

✦ Inform and train NGO staff on the conduct required when dealing with an armed group. INSO could organize regular training sessions on strategies for communicating and engaging with armed actors.

---

[21] See Chapter 3 and 5.
[22] « Front Populaire pour la Renaissance de la Centrafrique », ex-Seleka main faction led by Nourredine Adam.

2. Case Study in Bria: The humanitarian system in action in a conflict zone

Bria is a diamond-producing town in the east of the country where, at the time of writing, the humanitarian action system comprises MINUSCA, UN agencies (HCR, OCHA and WHO), four NGOs (MSF, Coopi, Oxfam and IMC) and a few missionaries, all working in a volatile security environment.[23] Bria was hardly touched by the conflict until the end of 2016. Occupied by the Seleka since the crisis started in 2013, Bria remained unaffected by the violence that swept the country. With the exception of the MINUSCA offensive in February 2015 to force ex-Seleka from the town and allow the local consultations promoted by the Bangui Forum, the situation in Bria was stable, with a very small presence of international NGOs and humanitarian coordination mechanisms.

Despite a gradual deterioration in security since the summer, on November 21, 2016, the FPRC attack on the UPC took everyone by surprise. Government representatives fled to find refuge in the MINUSCA base – meanwhile, access to the hospital came under the control of the armed groups for several days and access to displaced persons remained very limited until the end of military operations. Neither the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Aid (OCHA, a local office in Bambari) workers or MINUSCA were able to create the conditions to allow humanitarian workers to move around town. Since the end of 2016, Bria and the surrounding area form a zone of confrontation between armed groups that illustrates how the CAR conflict is conducted along community lines. Four community-based militias (the mainly Banda Anti-Balaka, the mainly Fulani UPC, a Goula faction of the FRPC and a Rounga faction of the FRPC) divided the town and clashed several times, the last time being in August 2017. This was followed by a partly-observed truce between the FRPC and the Anti-Balaka, signed in September 2017.

The confrontations in and around Bria had classic consequences, notably in terms of the reduction of humanitarian space and the intervention capacities of NGOs:

- The conflict was along community lines, each community with its own armed group; there was a split in the FRPC along ethnic lines; districts tended to become community enclaves;

- A large proportion of the town's population fled and set up a camp for displaced people near the MINUSCA base (camp PK3, with around 3,000 people by the end of 2016 and 35,000 by the end of 2017), which looks like becoming a small town; it shelters armed anti-Balaka combatants;

- Entire districts of the town have been destroyed;

---

[23] In December 2017, a peacekeeper was killed in the PK3 camp during clashes with the anti-Balaka. See MINUSCA press release, « Un casque bleu tué lors d'une attaque contre un check-point de la MINUSCA à l'entrée du camp de déplacés à Bria », 4 December 2017.

- The insecurity has reduced humanitarian access and NGOs have been victims of violence. Following threats, break-ins and looting, international NGOs had to temporarily suspend their activities, restrict their role and move their staff and materials to the MINUSCA camp. Some NGOs evacuated most of their staff to Bangui and only retained essential staff in Bria. During the waves of violent confrontation, national and international NGOs were looted and threatened by combatants for helping the "enemy community".[24]

2.1 Relations between Armed Groups and NGOs

Bria is an example of good practice for relations between humanitarian workers and armed groups. They reached an understanding that allowed them maintain humanitarian access in the town and some rural areas. Even though they overplay their good relations with NGOs by claiming they police the area on their behalf, the armed groups appreciated the interest taken by medical NGOs in their combatants. The NGOs made the armed groups aware of humanitarian principles and continue to maintain systematic contact with the armed groups before undertaking field trips in rural areas in order to obtain both security information and their approval. This approval even takes the form of written passes provided by the armed groups. However, the fragmentation of these groups means that many anti-Balaka groups still ignore these passes.

2.2 Relations with MINUSCA

MINUSCA provides the following services to the humanitarian community in Bria:

- Escorts heavy freight road transport between Bambari and Bria;
- Guards the hospital and OCHA and NGO offices/premises;
- Protects some distribution sites;
- Works with NGOs to establish and manage camps for displaced people;
- Shares security information at OCHA and CMCoord meetings (not all NGOs attend);

MINUSCA has evacuated the staff of some NGOs during the most violent clashes.

2.3 NGO Security Measures

In addition to action taken by MINUSCA, NGOs have taken other security measures:

- Relocated as a group to a site next to OCHA: WHO, Oxfam and the IMC share the same group of buildings, which facilitates security measures and evacuation by MINUSCA should

---

[24] Threats addressed to the NGO providing humanitarian assistance to the Peuls communities besieged in their neighbourhood during the clashes.

that prove necessary. Another NGO that has an isolated office in another district is seeking to join this group;

- Implemented the well-known security procedure of "hibernation" in OCHA premises and evacuation by MINUSCA;
- Adjusted the composition of the workforce according to intervention zones (90% of CAR nationals employed by international NGOs are recruited in Bangui).

Not all actors in Bria's humanitarian action system have the same restrictions on their movement, which complicates implementation of collective security arrangements. United Nations agency staff are allowed in the city center but must have a military escort in the suburbs and are not allowed out of town. Staff of some NGOs are authorised to move around the whole of town but not allowed out of town. Other NGO staff work in rural areas outside the town but along well-defined roads and must follow a security protocol.

2.4 Relations with Local NGOs

Although there are only a few local NGOs in Bria (theoretically, there are six, but only three are in practice operational), they play an essential role. Without them, many projects could not be implemented: distribution of non-food items (NFIs), awareness raising and protection. All international NGOs work with the small pool of CAR organizations. CAR NGOs have been even more exposed to the violence, and armed groups have sometimes taken over their offices.

The three local NGOs have many partnerships with UN agencies (WFP, UNICEF), MINUSCA (implementation of Quick Impact Projects) and some international NGOs. They have all received training to improve their technical skills, including abroad (women working for Femmes Leaders attended training in Côte d'Ivoire).

CAR NGOs often have an ethno-regional base (for example, Espérance is only present in eastern CAR). In Bria, a town in Eastern CAR populated with several ethnic groups (Fulani, Banda, Goula, Sara, etc.), New Agricultural Development is mainly Banda, Espérance is mainly Goula and MADEB is mainly Sara. Some CAR NGOs do not necessarily enjoy public support and have not necessarily been present in Bria for a long time (Espérance started work in Bria at the time of the crisis).

3. The Legal Context: The risk of a more rigorous legal framework for NGOs

A new bill on NGOs was submitted to the National Assembly in July 2017, provoking disquiet among much of the humanitarian community. In fact, the final document approved by the Permanent Secretariat for Non-Governmental Organizations within the planning ministry (SPONG) does not reflect the joint work carried out since last year by the CCO, the planning ministry and the SPONG itself in drafting a text that would guarantee the accountability of national and international non-governmental organizations while respecting humanitarian principles and operational requirements. However, this reflects the contradiction within the government, which has recovered its authority after a period of transition but still does not have the capacity to govern and provide basic social services.

3.1 Current situation: Challenges and risks of the new NGO bill

Analysis of the CAR's legislation on NGOs requires a review of the last fifteen years of the country's history. What emerges is a legal framework dictated by circumstances rather than a clear political vision. Over the years, legislative priorities have changed in accordance with the course of events that have shaped the country. The language has also changed and been refined to adapt to that of the organizations that need regulation. The result is a body of imprecise and incoherent legislation that is more likely to cause problems than provide solutions.

The first law on NGOs dates back to 2002,[25] just before the overthrow of President Ange-Félix Patassé.[26] At the time, only a handful of international NGOs and a few UN agencies had a presence in the country.[27] Patassé's priority was to provide a basic legal framework for these organizations, including minimum rules to control their operations and their relations with the state. The context was development and provisions regarding NGO rights and duties were not very different to those regulating associations. As a deterrent, the law took the unusual step of listing the sanctions that could be taken against NGOs before mentioning their justification, in a clear deterrent purpose.

There was a four-year wait before the regulations were issued.[28] In the meantime, the political panorama had completely changed. François Bozizé, who finally overthrew Patassé in March 2003, had just won the elections in 2005. Despite the support of international partners, the CAR went through a critical period. It suffered a serious economic crisis and armed groups opposing the

---

[25] Law 02.004, 21 May 2002, « Loi régissant les organizations non gouvernementales en République centrafricaine ».

[26] After more than a decade in power, Patassé saw the end of his regime approaching. The army — badly paid and ethnically divided — had a leading role in mutineries and attempts of coup d'état. Only six months after the law was issued, soldiers loyal to President Bozizé tried to take power, but they were stopped by the intervention of the Congolese militias of Jean-Pierre Bemba called for help by Patassé.

[27] Enrica Picco, « From being forgotten to being ignored », in Making Sense of the Central African Republic, edited by Tatiana Carayannis and Louisa Lombard, Zed Books (2015).

[28] Decree 06.155, 10 May 2006, « Décret portant sur l'application de la loi 02.004 du 21 mai 2002 régissant les organizations non gouvernementales en République centrafricaine ».

government occupied the north and east of the country. Bozizé saw international aid as a means of survival. The regulations for the act that were passed in 2002 included no additional administrative procedure for the registration of NGOs. However, a new section regulated fiscal and customs benefits. The government showed it was ready to make concessions to facilitate the activities of international organizations and simplify the residence of their employees and their families by introducing free and simplified visa procedures. The framework for coordination and dialogue with the government was strengthened with the creation of the SPONG and the Inter-Organizational Consultative Committee (CCIO).[29] By the end of the Bozizé period, cases of bad governance and a campaign to denigrate NGOs showed the limits of this coordination mechanism. However, the start of the conflict prevented any chance of legislative reform.

In 2014-2015, the wave of violence more than doubled the number of international NGOs in the country. The influx of international organizations made it essential to regulate them during the transition led by Catherine Samba-Panza. The transitional government introduced a new bill in 2015 without undertaking a critical analysis of the previous legal framework and the extent of implementation, but did not have time to get the job done. Even though the law did not see the light of day, the text laid the foundations for the bill that was recently submitted to the National Assembly.

This bill shows all the contradictions of the first year of Faustin-Archange Touadera's presidency. After the transition (2014-2016), the government asserted its authority by trying to control and monopolize aid. It hoped to be able to bring humanitarian funding under the heading of institutional cooperation, but overestimated the capacities of its administration. The unwieldy administrative and financial procedures in the bill would require the kind of efficient administration in the capital and in the provinces that the CAR has simply never had. The contradiction became more acute in the language of the legislative text, which was full of expressions borrowed from the international aid bureaucracy. Over the years, the legislature has understood the difference between humanitarian work and development, as well as the concepts of partnership and exit strategy.

The new bill therefore presents two major risks for NGOs: more administrative and financial procedures, and an attack on humanitarian principles. The former includes an increase in the documentation required to acquire the status of non-governmental organization (art.15-16) and the restriction of such status to three years - renewable (art. 17). However, article 21 limits this to one year for humanitarian NGOs. Of particular concern is the provision that makes tax exemption on imported goods (art. 24) even more unpredictable than previously. Even more worrying are articles that introduce administrative controls that restrict the independence of NGOs. To mention a few: government interference in the recruitment of international NGO heads of missions (art. 23); prior approval by the technical ministries and the planning ministry for funding from donors (art. 28); renewal of cooperation agreements are conditional on an evaluation of activities (art. 52).

Some interviewees felt that the bill would be an unsustainable bureaucratic burden and a threat to humanitarian principles, but others said it could also provide an opportunity for vetting national NGOs. In the CAR context, it is extremely difficult to distinguish between humanitarian NGOs and

---

[29] From 47 in December 2013 to 105 in January 2015, sources OCHA.
http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/CAR_3WOP%20-%20150121.pdf et
https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/20131201_3WOP_CAR.pdf

civil society organizations, as well as to verify minimum guarantees of transparency and accountability in the operations of NGOs that are all too often suspected of being close to a particular side of the conflict. In this sense, the new bill could act as a filter for national NGOs and give international NGOs and donors more guarantees in the selection of implementation partners.

3.2 Adapting Our Practice

The SPONG submitted the final draft of the proposed law to the National Assembly in July 2017, when sittings were suspended for the summer break. When sessions resumed, the legislature seemed to have other priorities: urgent approval of the budget and a debate (postponed several times) on the decentralization bill. This window gives international organizations an opportunity to strengthen their case and reflect on who might have an influence over revising the text. A further opportunity seems to be provided directly by the president of the National Assembly, Karim Meckassoua, who has indicated an interest in holding a hearing for NGOs during the session allocated to debate on the bill. Moreover, the humanitarian coordination, the CCO and some donors have already taken steps to express their views to the executive (notably during President Touadéra's most recent visit to Brussels).

Recommendations to avoid the introduction of a more difficult legal framework for NGOs

✦ Prepare the case against the new bill on NGOs, referring to: the impact of the administrative burden on the operational capacity of organizations; the operational and security consequences of violating the principles of independence and impartiality; the requirement to balance respect for state sovereignty with facilitation of the provision of humanitarian aid. The case should be completed by a detailed analysis of the actors who could influence the amendment and final approval of the bill.

✦ Meticulously and collectively prepare for a possible hearing on the bill at the National Assembly. This would provide a unique opportunity to communicate opinions on the provisions of the bill and to raise the awareness of deputies about humanitarian principles and the work of NGOs.

---

4. The Political Environment

In this report, we understand the political environment to mean the whole range of relations between NGOs and 1) local and national authorities, 2) civil society organizations, and 3) MINUSCA. These relations, which are difficult and problematic, condition the governance of humanitarian aid in the CAR.

Although the CAR authorities and civil society organizations disagree on many points, they are at one in severely critisizing the international NGOs. Local authorities and civil society believe that the international NGOs deprive them of the godsend of aid. They see them as illegitimate competitors and accuse them of treating the country as "conquered territory". In addition, they accuse them of looting the country's resources, a charge made by government authorities (for example, the director of the Cabinet of the Minister of mines) and broadcast by local media. It is striking that three years after the emergency humanitarian intervention that started in 2014, the anti-NGO discourse should be so omnipresent in CAR government, civil service and civil society circles.

The NGOs must maintain relations with the United Nations but neither side is comfortable with the relationship. Despite the concept of integrated missions, United Nations agencies act independently and maintain very diverse relations with NGOs, as indicated by their many roles: donor, coordinator, facilitator for humanitarian aid providers, etc. However, MINUSCA plays a leading role in this relationship and there is no love lost between it and the international NGOs.

4.1 Relations with the authorities: mutual hostility

The hostility of the CAR authorities towards humanitarian NGOs is far from being a secret, having been publicly expressed many times at the highest political levels. In 2017, the prime minister attacked NGOs at an interministerial committee meeting on the crisis. In a recent speech to prefects, the president urged them to ensure that donor projects are implemented "without conflict" and that "humanitarian NGOs and others operate under the authority of the state".[30] During the repatriation of Muslim families from the southeast, the Minister for Humanitarian Affairs described the IOM as a "shit little NGO",[31] revealing at the same time his general view of NGOs and his ignorance about the IOM, which is a UN agency. The government continues to spout anti-NGO rhetoric. The most explicit illustration of this is the recently proposed bill on NGOs, which, in its current form, is more accurately described as anti-NGO. In the same spirit, the government has continuously failed to condemn attacks against NGOs in.

Meanwhile, the NGOs are criticizing:

- **The financial harassment and corruption in the CAR civil service.** Corruption is systemic in the customs, tax and other departments. The Telecommunications Regulation Agency

---

[30] Statement of the CAR's president during a speech to prefects, Bangui, 27 October 2017.
[31] *Dixit* the IOM Director in Bangui.

(ART) has distinguished itself in its attempts to excessively tax NGOs.[32] Systemic corruption is a supplementary obstacle to aid provision because it increases the cost of aid and complicates and delays its distribution. For example, NGOs recently had to pay fines and tax adjustments for the period 2013-2015 (when the government was not functioning) and were sometimes asked to make payments directly into the private bank accounts of inspectors. Moreover, the fiscal pressure constantly imposed by the authorities compels all NGOs to resort to legal consultants.

- **The weakness of institutional dialogue arrangements with the government.** Although there is a framework for dialogue in normal times (the SPONG at the planning ministry) and in times of crisis (the interministerial crisis committee that reports to the prime minister), NGOs complain about the lack of dialogue. Paradoxically, SPONG held more meetings before the crisis than after it (the last major meeting was in October 2016) and the crisis committee's capacity to react leaves a lot to be desired. In addition, despite the arguments put forward by the CCO, the government has not nominated reference points in each of the relevant ministries.

Although the authorities have created a ministerial body responsible for humanitarian action since the transition (2014-2016), working with the CAR authorities is very difficult. The ministry responsible for humanitarian affairs has no humanitarian intervention capacity and does not have exclusive jurisdiction over certain humanitarian issues. Moreover, there is no single point of contact for relations between humanitarian organizations and the government.

At the operational level, several projects that required the active participation of local and national authorities have been resounding failures. These failures are often due to the fact that the local and/or national authorities' interests were not directly in line with the projects. In other words, these projects were damaging to the financial interests of these authorities and risked raising questions about the usual privatization of public services that has been common practice in the CAR for decades.

The government resents the NGOs for many reasons. Since the start of the crisis in 2013, humanitarian workers and the government have disagreed about specific policy issues (the enclaves, the relocation of vulnerable populations, the displaced people's camp at Mpoko airport, etc.) and they have different discourses on the country's current situation. At the start of November 2017, the government organized a forum for private investors and charaterized the situation as post-crisis while, since the unrest in the southeast in May, NGOs have issued warnings about the deteriorating conflict situation and upsurge of violence. Above all, the main reason for government resentment is the strategic question of *who controls international aid.* This issue came up in all interviews: state interlocutors say there is a struggle between them and the NGOs for control of the aid sector. Before the crisis in 2013, and despite many cases of poor management and misappropriation, most international aid was provided in the form of institutional cooperation and, in one way or another, was channeled through the government. This situation was inverted after the crisis started: only a small fraction of international aid now goes through the government, notably budgetary aid. The government and civil service are consequently frustrated and see NGOs as competitors for international aid funds.

---

[32] On the customs systematic corruption, see Lionel Pascal, « République centrafricaine: douanes et corruption, causes de la déliquescence du pays ? », L'Harmattan, 2015.

However, CAR civil servants are not always negative about NGOs. Some officials responsible for implementation, who are lower down the administrative hierarchy, think highly of NGOs. Unlike civil service managers who see the NGOs as illegitimate competitors, officials employed by certain departments in the field, for example agricultural technicians, work on implementing projects alongside NGOs and earn a temporary rate of pay on this basis. Many of these technical staff believe that NGOs do a good job in the field and an even better one than the government did before the crisis. Many think NGOs are better employers because, unlike government departments, they do not pay wages several months late.[33] Although senior and middle ranking civil service managers are very critical of NGOs, this is much less the case among staff involved in implementing projects.

4.2 Relations with CAR Civil Society: From subcontracting to partnership

International NGOs and civil society organizations have a working relationship that pre-dates the crisis, but this has intensified since 2014 while still being based on the "donor-implementer model". Some CAR organizations work in a structural partnership (for example, the CAR Red Cross is a member of the Red Cross movement and therefore benefits from the support of other members of the movement in the CAR). Other organizations that have been on the scene for quite a while and enjoy a certain level of recognition have long-term support (JUPEDEC, Femmes Juristes, Vitalité +, etc.). Finally, the crisis has directly prompted partnerships, such as the USAID-funded Consortium of International NGOs that maintain an inter-faith platform in Bangui.[34] Some national NGOs are almost exclusively constituted in order to form a partnership with an international NGO and thereby gain access to funding. In general, most CAR NGOs have experience in community development but are novices in the field of humanitarian work.[35]

In considering all of the above information, the following challenges in forming partnerships with CAR civil society organizations are real and should not be minimized:

- A lack of technical skills and human resources resulting in poor management.

- Muddled proliferation of platforms and other coordination formulas.

- Quarrels over representativeness and leadership. The last quarrel that made the headlines in Bangui was between the CAR Inter-NGOs Council (CIONGCA), whose president contested the date of the end of his term in office. The interior minister intervened to sanction some CIONGCA members while the SPONG tried to conciliate stakeholders.

---

[33] Interview with farmers, Bouar, August 2017.
[34] USAID funds a partnership between the inter-faith platform and four NGOs providing structural support (Catholic Relief Service, Islamic Relief, World Vision, Aegis Trust).
[35] Oxfam, « Fresh analysis de la capacité humanitaire en République centrafricaine », April 2015.

- High risk of corruption. Accusations of financial misappropriation underlie the current quarrel in CIONGCA.[36] The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria has stopped working with the CAR Red Cross.

- Lack of impartiality vis-à-vis the conflict and politicization. Like the evangelical churches, CAR politicians are in the habit of creating or investing in NGOs. This is an old phenomenon and many CAR NGOs have links to politicians or members of their family.

- CAR NGOs recognised for their skills and reliability are involved in an excessive number of partnerships. Victims of their success, many organizations ask to work with them but they are overwhelmed by the extent of their commitments.

The proliferation of "joint-ventures" between international and CAR NGOs generated by the crisis has been accompanied by growing dissatisfaction because while subcontracting has grown, partnership in the full sense of the word remains the exception. Both sides are responsible for this situation. International NGOs and UN agencies content themselves with organizing specific short-term projects to build the capacities of their local partners. Another issue is that the internal governance of civil society organizations makes it difficult for them to work with international NGOs. Financially very fragile, they adopt a chameleon-like mode of operation in order to access all funding opportunities. They often find themselves in the role of service providers for international NGOs and UN agencies. This role is often limited to data collection, raising community awareness and aid distribution. As subcontractors, their financial dependence on international NGOs and UN agencies is a source of great frustration.

4.3 Relations with MINUSCA: No love lost

Relations between humanitarian NGOs and MINUSCA are indispensable but difficult and are not immune to a classic problem: the local population has difficulty distinguishing between the two groups. Moreover, NGO policies towards the peacekeepers are very diverse, ranging from the absence of any contact to the provision of services. Most NGOs have policies somewhere between these two extremes. As MINUSCA must "facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid",[37] it provides several types of service to humanitarian actors:

- Security in the form of escorts for some transport;

- Security at certain humanitarian premises (bases, hospitals, etc.);

- Security information;

- Security for humanitarian operations and humanitarian assistance as a last resort. Therefore, at the end of October 2017, in accordance with civil-military guidelines, MINUSCA provided

---

[36] « Télescopage au sein du bureau de CIONGCA », Le Confident, 31 October 2017.
[37] United Nations Security Council, Resolution 2387 (2017), 15 November 2017.

security for distributing aid to the people of Pombolo by humanitarian actors and provided direct medical assistance. Access to this location, where MINUSCA has a temporary base, was judged to be very dangerous.

Fig. 6. MINUSCA Presence, MINUSCA October 2017: ttp://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/dpko/MINUSCA.pdf

Civil-military guidelines were agreed upon in 2017 after two years of discussion. OCHA is responsible for publiizing them, but there is no monitoring of implementation and it is generally felt that they have not improved relations between MINUSCA and humanitarian actors. According to some interlocutors, they are more symbolic than real. Relations between MINUSCA and humanitarian actors are too centralized in Bangui and are constrained by the relatively antagonistic principles of these organizations. Although this bureaucratic centralization of both the civilian and military sections of MINUSCA does not pose problems in in times of peace, it can quickly show itself to be a barrier in times of crisis. In such cases, MINUSCA heads of office in the field play an extremely marginal role, limiting themselves to gathering security information to send to Bangui. Recently, videoconferences between field offices and HQ in the capital during times when the MINUSCA base was under fire were not uncommon. The NGOs therefore find themselves having to manage crises with an interlocutor that they cannot do without, but are at the same time deprived of any real decision-making power. In addition, MINUSCA/NGO coordination in Bangui is not adapted to the speed of a security crisis, which requires quick operational decisions. Moreover, the coordination is felt to be unsatisfactory by some. NGOs do not have the same policy towards MINUSCA: some take care to keep their distance while others use MINUSCA services - for example, escorts.

Although Central Africans are generally able to tell the difference between humanitarian organizations and UN forces, they do not view them as independent from each other. Integration of the Humanitarian Coordination with MINUSCA generates even more confusion. While MINUSCA is seen as "an armed humanitarian organization", NGOs are seen as MINUSCA's humanitarian department.[38] In fact, activities undertaken by NGOs and the MINUSCA civilian affairs unit in certain towns are very similar, especially when it comes to social cohesion and reconciliation programs. For example, after an attack on an NGO base in Batangafo, the armed group responsible sent a letter of apology to…MINUSCA.

4.4 Adapting Our Practice

With CAR authorities:

An interministerial crisis committee with representatives from the government, MINUSCA, UN agencies and NGOs has just been launched under the auspices of the prime minister's office and the Humanitarian Coordination. The aim is to build a bridge between international organizations and CAR authorities in emergency situations as well as to encourage national ownership of interventions. For the moment the committee is more of a forum for government attacks on NGOs and the United Nations (not always differentiated) than for constructive and concerted dialogue about how to respond to the crisis.

Joint UN/NGO/government missions recently took place after security crises (Batangafo and Kaga Bandoro). The aim of these missions was to display a willingness to work together and develop a joint response to troublemakers. They deal with some coordination problems but it is rare to see national authorities taking ownership of solutions identified to resolve crises.

Recommendations to improve relations with the authorities

✦ Intensify communication with national and local CAR authorities:

- Attend all coordination forums with local and national authorities

- Submit hard copy annual activity reports to local and national authorities, requiring confirmation of receipts
- Invite authorities to Project launch ceremonies

- Request quarterly SPONG meetings, which will bring together the CCO steering committee and representatives of national NGOs

✦Improve CAR authorities' understanding of the humanitarian system:

---

[38] Quoted in Renouf J.S., « Engage to stay and deliver: Humanitarian Access in the Central African Republic », Norwegian Refugee Council, 2015.

> - Systematize training sessions on humanitarian principles and the humanitarian coordination system delivered by OCHA to prefects, sub-prefects and national security force officers before their deployment in the provinces.
>
> - Inform the local authorities (mayors) about humanitarian principles and the functioning of OCHA's operation of the humanitarian coordination system.
>
> ✦Revive and publicize the civil servants day rates table and other costs of moving around.
>
> ✦Calculate the additional costs of the financial and administrative harassment and share the costs of legal consultants.
>
> ✦Prepare a study on the rulings by the administration and the courts on the main points of contention with NGOs in order to identify inconsistencies and strengthen the case put to the authorities.
>
> ✦ Continue asking the government to condemn attacks against humanitarian workers.

With civil society:

Several international organizations, including NGOs and UN agencies, have their own systems for evaluating their CAR partners and categorizing them according to their strengths and weaknesses. Coaching and rigorous financial monitoring of partners, sometimes conducted on a monthly basis to avoid unjustified expenditure, seem to be indispensable measures. Moreover, Oxfam launched a detailed analysis of civil society organizations at the end of 2017.

Some CAR structures benefit from long-term structural support that is not tied to any particular project. For example, thanks to its partners in the Red Cross movement, the CAR Red Cross receives support that is not connected to any particular project, as well as capacity building input for specific projects. This is accompanied by the provision of expat staff and dual-level monthly coordination within the Red Cross movement: meetings of mission leaders (strategy) and program managers (operational).

Some UN agencies and NGOs have explored the option of partnerships with faith-based networks, which are widespread in the CAR. However, this has had only mixed success.

Some CAR organizations now have enough experience and professional recognition to undertake training activities and provide technical support to other local NGOs.

As part of the Grand Bargain negotiated at the Istanbul summit, commitments were made to build the capacities of local NGOs.[39]

---

[39] « The World Humanitarian Summit: Winners and Losers», IRIN, 26 May 2016.

Recommendations for moving from subcontracting to partnership
✦ Develop a training strategy for the CAR humanitarian sector with support from humanitarian training organizations. OCHA should pilot this task in association with interested donors. ✦ Clearly distinguish which CAR NGOs have humanitarian skills and which have community development skills to avoid asking the former to do the work of the latter and vice versa. ✦ Develop long-term partnerships in order to prepare CAR organizations to transition from being service providers to taking over the work currently done by international NGOs.

With MINUSCA:

The guidelines for armed escorts and completion of the civil-military guidelines after two and a half years of work are helping to clarify roles and relations between MINUSCA and humanitarian workers.

Recommendations to avoid confusion
✦ Systematically record instances of confusion about the work of humanitarian workers and MINUSCA; organize meetings between relevant NGOs and MINUSCA to analyze these cases to help make the necessary decisions to limit negative consequences. ✦ Publicize the civil-military guidelines and monitor their implementation. ✦ In the event of last recourse humanitarian intervention by MINUSCA, quickly prepare for NGOs to resume responsibility for humanitarian work. ✦ Argue for the decentralization of decision-making to MINUSCA's field offices in the event of a security crisis. ✦ Institutionalize a single channel of communication between NGOs and MINUSCA: to this end, CMCoord should be strengthened quickly so that it can be more effective in communicating information to avoid duplication of communication channels.

5. Financial Environment: More Money, More Access?

5.1 Current situation: The trend towards reduced funding of humanitarian work

Humanitarian needs in the CAR are underfunded. This has been the case since before the coup in 2013, when donors did not know how to respond to a crisis that did not fit emergency nor development criteria. The same could be said of their position during the unprecedented wave of violence that shook the country in 2013-2014, despite the media attention given to the crisis, the mobilization of the international community to avoid the worst and the triggering of Level 3 (a UN mechanism that guarantees maximum resources and funding, activated in the CAR between December 2013 and June 2015). The situation is the same today because of the myriad new humanitarian emergencies that broke out throughout the country just as the CAR was thought to be ready to resume recovery. With the remarkable exception of the years 2014-2015, humanitarian appeals are still funded at the rate of 30-40 per cent.[40]
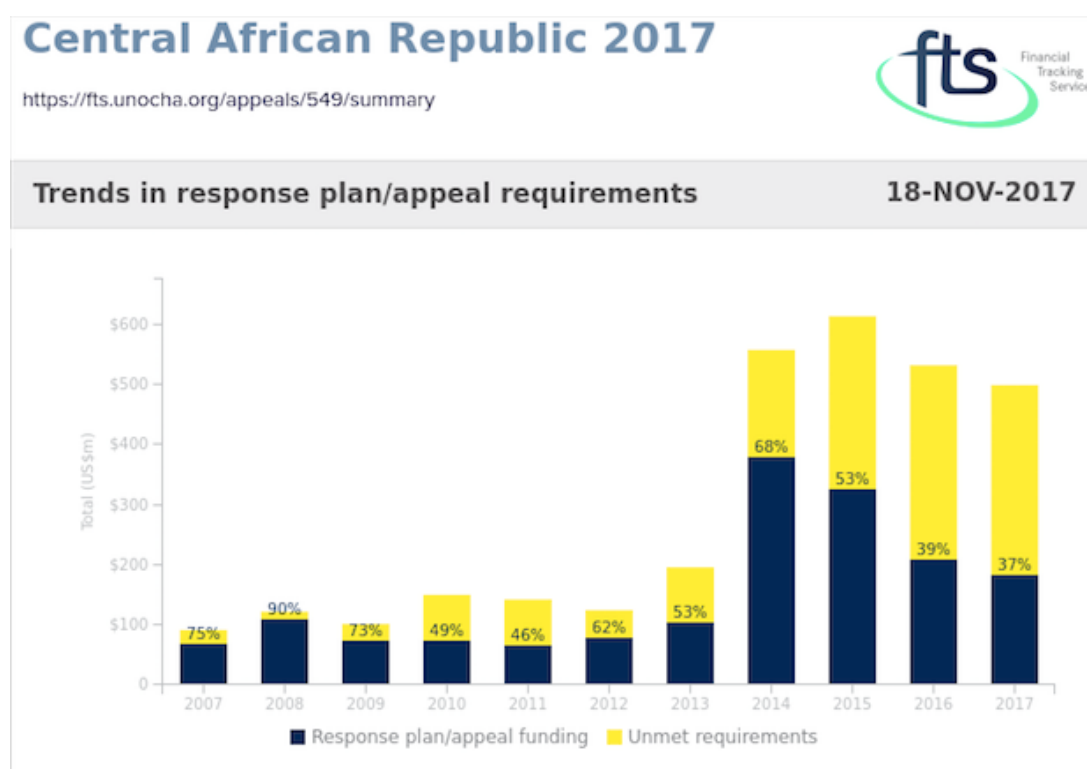
Fig. 7. Trends in response plan/appeal requirements, FTS, November 2017: https://fts.unocha.org/appeals/549/summary

---

[40] « Central African Republic », Financial Tracking Service, 20 November 2017.
https://fts.unocha.org/countries/43/summary/2017

Central African Republic 2017

https://fts.unocha.org/appeals/549/summary

Funding trends inside and outside the response plan/appeal

18-NOV-2017
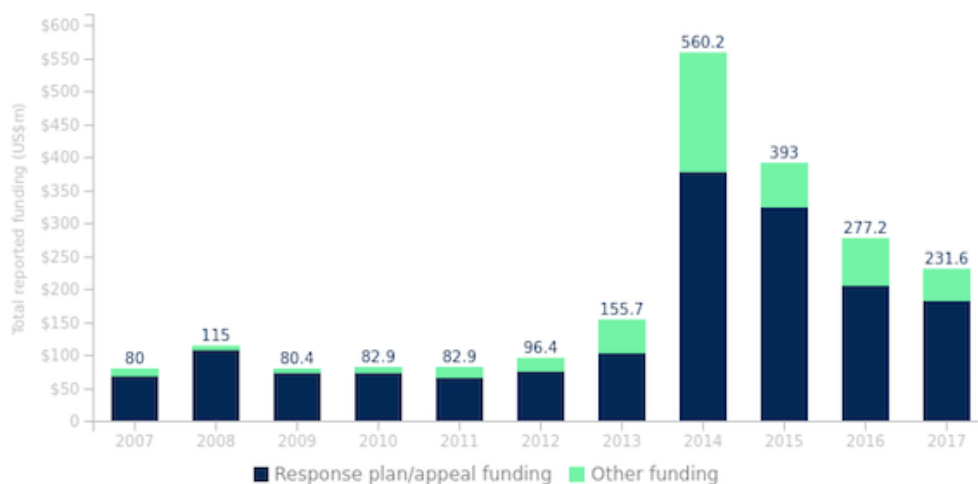
Fig. 8. Funds trens inside and outside the response plan/appeal, FTS, November 2017: https://fts.unocha.org/appeals/549/summary

The United States (USAID)[41] and the European Commission (ECHO)[42] are the main donors to humanitarian work in the CAR. In both cases, contributions were at their highest in 2015-2016 but remained steady in 2017 at lower levels, that donors will most likely maintain in 2018 (even though ECHO funding will cover a larger geographical area). USAID contributed $79 million in 2014, $83.9 million in 2015, $77.9 million in 2016, and $79.7 million in 2017 (up to 30 September). ECHO contributed: €33 million in 2013, €23 million in 2015, €24 million in 2016, €15 million in 2017 and has allocated €12.2 million for 2018 but will consider increasing that sum.[43]

---

[41] « Central African Republic », USAID, 20 November 2017. https://www.usaid.gov/central-africa-republic
[42] « ECHO : Central African Republic », European Commission, 20 November 2017.
https://ec.europa.eu/echo/where/africa/central-african-republic_en
[43] ECHO Meeting in Brussels on 29 November 2017. It should be noted that in 2018 the 8% of the ECHO global budget —
1,6 billions of EURO — will be assigned to education in emergency situations.

Largest sources of response plan/appeal funding		⊕
	Funding for response plan/appeal (US$m)	As a share of overall funding to the response plan/appeal (%)
United States of America, Government of	47.7	26.3%
World Food Programme	21.2	11.7%
European Commission	16.8	9.3%
United Kingdom, Government of	16.0	8.8%
Central Emergency Response Fund	15.6	8.6%
Japan, Government of	10.4	5.7%
Germany, Government of	9.4	5.2%
Sweden, Government of	7.0	3.9%
Canada, Government of	7.1	3.9%
Ireland, Government of	5.9	3.2%

Fig. 9. Largest sources of response plan/appeal funding: https://fts.unocha.org/appeals/549/summary

In addition to the challenges typical of a prolonged crisis, with the conflict about to enter its fifth year, there is the problem of access to which we referred in the first part of this report. Donors are unlikely to continue to disperse funds that are not being used due to restrictions on access or lack of alternative proposals. In addition, although the history of funding clearly shows that donors have never prioritized the CAR, in 2017 NGOs also had to pay the price for some hasty decisions. One year ago, in Brussels, CAR partners supported the new government by adopting a National Plan for Recovery and Peacebuilding (RCPCA). Absolutely praiseworthy in its aim to target the structural causes of the crisis, this plan however failed to foresee the renewed upsurge in violence despite its evident predictability. The outcome of the agreed funding plan is that humanitarian NGOs have relatively modest budgets. Except for MSF and the ICRC, only three organizations had a budget close to €10 million in 2017 (DRC, NRC and ACTED). Another nine had a budget of €5 million to €10 million,[44] while the rest had a budget of less than €5 million.

Three further paradoxes characterize the funding structure for the CAR crisis:

- Short-term funding to fund long-term needs;

- Reduction in funding for humanitarian work due to a deteriorating crisis situation, even though needs are consequently increasing;

- The disparity between humanitarian funding and recovery funding.

---

[44] More specifically: ACF, IMC, Mercy Corps, Oxfam, Plan International, PU-AMI, World Vision, French Red Cross and Dutch Red Cross.

These three paradoxes show that funding is not adapted to the dynamics of the conflict, and is, in fact, extremely out of sync.

5.2 Impact on NGO Interventions: Constraints and opportunities

Would more money result in greater access? The answers to this question have been very diverse, but they have been successful in identifying three important issues that NGOs and donors must take into account in their strategies: presence on the ground, initial responses to crises and a quick transition from emergency to early recovery. Before analyzing this in greater detail, here is a general point about the consequences of the many attacks that have targeted NGOs. Even though there are no official figures, the financial losses caused by thefts, robberies and looting is enormous, especially given a context in which rebuilding infrastructure in remote areas of the country requires a major financial and logistical effort. For example, the resurgence of violence in its intervention zone led one NGO to estimate a loss of $250,000 between July and October 2017. Having full estimates of losses and of the time and resources necessary to recover could be extremely useful in budgeting for the costs of insecurity and helping donors and the CAR authorities understand the situation.

Recommendation to strengthen the case to donors
Help donors and the CAR authorities to understand the cost of insecurity by estimating the overall financial loss suffered by NGOs in 2017 and the cost of the support necessary to remain operational in the CAR.

First, a continuing presence on the ground despite insecurity is particularly essential for having access to people in need of humanitarian assistance in the most remote areas. Moreover, some donors have clearly stated that their strategies prioritize NGOs that are able to "stay and deliver".[45] Therefore, funding to rebuild damaged infrastructure or to strengthen passive security at their bases is an important asset that gives organizations a greater chance of keeping a presence on the ground. Similarly, building the capacities of NGOs to analyze the security context and formulate strategies to engage with armed groups, whether through recruiting additional experienced staff or training existing staff, could help to considerably reduce the risks of becoming a target.

Second, the capacity to provide an appropriate initial response within an acceptable period is essential in the current situation: a long-term humanitarian crisis with peaks of violence in certain parts of the country that affect small but very vulnerable parts of the population. The flagship tool in such cases is the Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM), a system that, under UNICEF's leadership, aims to coordinate warnings, evaluations and responses on Non-Food Items (NFI) such as water, hygiene and sanitation. On the one hand, NGOs fear the impact of a reduction in funding on the functioning of this mechanism and emphasize how additional funds could improve its operational capacities, for

---

[45] « Engage to stay and deliver: Humanitarian Access in the Central African Republic », Norwegian Refugee Council, 2015.

example, through the purchase of a helicopter that could reach more remote areas or new UNHAS airplanes that have a greater freight capacity. The crisis in the southeast has highlighted the lack of funding for air transport in a context in which armed groups have made access by road both slow and dangerous, notably by destroying bridges and attacking convoys. On the other hand, donors say that funding is available but complain about the lack of innovative proposals, both with regard to the content of the assistance provided (for example, including food distribution) and the methods for implementing interventions (for example, a country emergency team). However, some interviewees felt that RRM receives disproportionate attention to the detriment of both the emergency response capacity of each NGO and the successive stages of intervention.

Recommendations to improve emergency responses

✦ Without neglecting the emergency response capacity of each NGO in its intervention zone, take steps to create a unique rapid country intervention mechanism along the lines of the RRM to ensure appropriate funding; broaden the field of intervention, by for example including food and health assistance; consider innovative implementation methods to be approved on a case-by-case basis, especially in difficult access zones (security and logistics); and consolidate the transition between different phases, from evaluation of the initial response to monitoring in the following months.

✦ When drafting projects, include a specific line item in the budget to strengthen passive security at NGO bases and officers.

✦ Obtain drones to carry out aerial reconnaissance.

✦ Increase air transport capacities (helicopters, freight transport aircraft) for emergency responses in areas that are inaccessible by road. Humanitarian donors should make provision for a special disbursement dedicated to air transport use in emergency responses. The Humanitarian Country Team would be the decision-making body for activating this disbursement.

Donors (especially the European Union) are increasingly encouraging a particular method of work: consortiums of NGOs. This responds to a desire to rationalize humanitarian work in a context where there are around 50 international NGOs in the CAR. However, donors also want to ease the burden of training and monitoring of projects. ECHO, the Bekou Fund and USAID fund such consortia in the CAR. Teamwork is often said to be more economic and effective for meeting diverse needs in a large country. However, some advantages of working as a consortium are exaggerated and the conditions for a consortium to work well are not always in place. Although consortia provide economies of scale for procurement, they rarely reduce the costs of intervention because of the costs of coordination and the duplication of administration.

Consortia have encountered operational problems and have had to rethink their internal coordination structure. NGOs are gradually learning the conditions necessary for consortia to function well. A workshop examining their experience in this matter could help to formalize their understanding and strategy for working as a consortium.

<table>
<tr><td>

Recommendations to improve consortia

✦ Encourage consortia based on complementarity of skills and not only on geographical complementarity.

✦ Organize a workshop to draw lessons from the experience of working as a consortium.

✦ Check that the conditions are in place for the consortium to work well (consensual coordination, complementarity of skills, shared understanding of the project and its risks, agreement on sharing the financial costs, etc.).

</td></tr>
</table>

Finally, the funding strategies of the main donors play a key role in what has for years caused a real headache in the CAR, which is how to link up emergency and development interventions in a country where humanitarian and structural needs are equally enormous. It is interesting to note that the problem has continued over the years, but the hope of resolving it through an appropriate funding mechanism has almost disappeared. The Bekou Trust Fund could have been this mechanism.[46] This EU trust fund, created in July 2014 with a little over €64 million, has almost tripled its contributions in three years.[47] The only successful transfer of emergency funding to recovery funding mentioned by interviewees was that of the ALIMA medical project in Boda, which was gradually transferred from ECHO to Bekou.

Funded to the tune of €230 million for the period 2017-2019, the Bekou Trust Fund remains one of the only funding instruments for early recovery, especially in the health, gender and food security fields. Nevertheless, its simplified procedures still seem too burdensome for many NGOs, including the need to form consortia with local organizations. In a recent report,[48] the European Court of Auditors said the Bekou Fund has not succeeded in becoming a "coordination mechanism that allows the international community to contribute effectively in a coordinated way to the stabilization of the CAR", because it lacks influence over the coordination between donors. Along the same lines, the Court added that transparency and speed in the management of funds must be improved. In addition, some interviewees said that going in search of specific tools or funding to fill the gap between emergency and development work only leads to "dual labelling", while many interventions that could be included in the framework of early recovery are eventually funded by humanitarian funds. The general opinion therefore is that, in the CAR context, the flexibility of funding, notably in terms of its availability, duration and adaptability, rather than its name, is much more significant in terms of guaranteeing NGO access to the intervention in question.

Although the CAR crisis has worsened and the prospect of an end to the crisis has faded, the relevance of sharing humanitarian and recovery funds can be questioned, notably by the EU. The

---

[46] « Bekou Trust Fund », European Commission, 20 November 2017. https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/bekou-trust-fund-introduction_en
[47] More specifically: €64 million in 2014, €113 million in 2015, €173 million in 2016.
[48] European Court of Auditors, « The EU Bekou Trust Fund for the Central African Republic: a hopeful beginning despite some shortcomings », September 2017.

funds made available by European donors for recovery are ten times greater than those for humanitarian work, but it is the humanitarian needs that are increasing!

Recommendations for adapting funding to the context of a long-term humanitarian crisis

✦ Replace the six-month to one-year project approach for three-year framework agreements between humanitarian organizations and donors. Such a framework agreement would set humanitarian assistance objectives, select priority intervention zones and set a budget. As part of this agreement, humanitarian organizations would present an annual action plan to donors, which could discuss and amend the plan. This agreement would allow humanitarian organizations to adopt a funding plan similar to that of international NGOs and give greater flexibility in the management of their budget. That would also reduce the administrative burden, free up more time for monitoring and improve the quality of implementation.

✦ Explain to donors the need for them to take into account the time it takes for an NGO to establish itself in an area once it has been allocated funds.

✦ Make a joint case to donors to extend the funding period for humanitarian work and ask them to agree on a single format for project proposals.

✦ Argue for a readjustment of humanitarian and recovery funds to the advantage of the former.

---

6. Logistical, Environment and Human Resources

6.1 Current situation: costly and sometimes slow intervention logistics

The CAR is a low population density country (6.1/km2). Its area is a little more than that of metropolitan France (622,984km2). It has no transport infrastructure, which considerably increases the cost of intervention. Only 10% of the road network is paved. This is national highway n°1, which links the capital, Bangui, to the border with Cameroon (Garoua Boulai) and forms the country's main supply route. Only one section of this road (Baoro-Bouar) is not paved. Its strategic location makes it important to ensure the security of this road, a task undertaken first by the French military operation Sangaris and then by MINUSCA. Bearing in mind the persistent risk of crime, MINUSCA organizes escorts for convoys of trucks that use the road.

The rest of the CAR road network is in ruins. Moreover, the rainy season makes part of the country inaccessible by road, for example, the Vakaga region. In addition to these climatic and physical constraints, illegal road blocks,[49] which are common in the CAR, increase the cost of transport. Banditry, which existed before the crisis, makes many roads dangerous.

In some regions, the crisis has increased the road transport problems and even made it impossible in some places. In the southeast, since May 2017, self-defence groups have started destroying bridges to hinder the intervention of MINUSCA troops and humanitarian workers. Transport is not the only infrastructure to be targeted and damaged: the telephone communications infrastructure is also targeted in the south east.

All these factors contribute to the high logistical costs, with a substantial part affected by the transport budget. The support cost (made up in large part by logistical costs) on average represents between 30 and 50% of the budget of humanitarian programs. These costs can exceed 50% where operations take place around the country's periphery. According to one NGO that conducted a detailed analysis of transport costs in its intervention zone, they vary between $7.5 and $12.5 per km.

The problem of cost has an impact in terms of delays to humanitarian interventions. Geographical remoteness combined with transport costs extend the intervention times of humanitarian organizations. However, slow but cheaper interventions by road are preferred over quick but costly air intervention. At the time of writing, the proposal to intervene in Mobaye, a town about 300 km from Bangui, made by an NGO one month ago has yet to receive any response.

---

[49] Truck drivers working for NGOs often pay taxes at the road blocks. See: «The Politics of Pillage: the Political Economy of Roadblocks in the Central African Republic », International Peace Information Service & Danish Institute for International Studies, November 2017.

6.2 Adapting Practice: Sharing logistical services

Given the high cost of interventions, the division of work and some technical tasks has permitted the reduction of some logistical costs. Storage and transport are also partly shared in the CAR. In Bangui, since 2014, Première Urgence-Aide Médicale Internationale (PU-AMI) has developed collective storage capacities that are currently used by about 20 partner NGOs. PU-AMI graduated from the refrigerated storage of medicines, has a cost recovery rate of 20%, analyzes storage capacities and stock management and delivers training in Alindao at the request of humanitarian partners. PU-AMI is involved in the development of this specific skill for humanitarian partners who need it in the provinces.

With regard to the division of logistical work, transport and storage go together. UNHAS provides an essential air transport service for NGOs (staff and small volume freight) and Handicap International (HI) has established a logistical hub in Bambari, which began to operate at the start of 2017. It plans a second hub in western CAR, in Bossangoa. Thanks to the sharing of road transport, HI allows NGOs and UN agencies to save money on transportation and improve risk management in comparison to private transporters who sometimes take ill-advised risks. On this point, HI works with INSO and the transporters' information network. 27 NGOs and UN agencies use this service. After initially providing the service free for NGOs, HI is now recovering part of the cost.

Recommendations to reduce intervention delays and costs

✦ Fund the creation of a second logistical hub in one of the towns in western CAR at the start of 2018.

✦ Store emergency materials at the logistical hubs and develop stock management skills among interested humanitarian partners.

6.3 Current Situation: A Deficit of Human Resources

Many NGO managers interviewed highlighted the problem of human resources. Humanitarian organizations find it difficult to recruit and retain skilled and experienced national and international staff. At the international level, the CAR's bad image leads to the recruitment of inexperienced staff and there is a high turnover rate, which is also caused by the permanent operational and security pressures that cause stress and burn-out. Coordination duties, the need to represent the organization and the constant search for funding mean that NGO managers must be present in the capital, to the detriment of their availability in the field to support their team, negotiate access and manage activities.

It is difficult to find technically skilled national staff in the CAR. The deficit is particularly serious among health staff, who are much sought after by medical NGOs. In general, the lack of skills means it is only possible to recruit local people in the provinces for less-qualified jobs such as security guards and drivers. Other CAR nationals deployed in the provinces are often recruited in Bangui,

which increases the resentment felt by local people who are quick to accuse NGOs of "bringing in people from elsewhere" and of "not employing local people".[50] Moreover, there is also a high turnover of CAR nationals employed by NGOs, which is explained by the strong demand in the humanitarian labour market and the wages offered by the United Nations. One of the consequences of this turn-over is the lack of knowledge of the intervention context and its actors.

6.4 Adapting Practice: Temporary Deployment of Emergency Staff

When the CAR crisis was classified as Level 3 by the United Nations (2013-2015),[51] UN agencies and humanitarian NGOs deployed additional staff in crisis situations. These staff members left the country before the end of the Level 3 period. Although some NGOs maintained an internal emergency response capacity, this was not done systematically. The development of new humanitarian emergencies in 2017 highlighted the need to increase emergency response capacities and some NGOs have already developed or stepped up emergency response training for national and international staff. Similarly, although some NGOs employ psychologists to help staff who have been traumatized by violence, this is not systematic.

Recommendations to strengthen staff skills, retain staff and ensure psychological care

✦ Develop training of national staff on emergency responses.

✦ Ensure the employment of experienced managers, make provisions for adequate contractual conditions, teamwork and wages to match the required experience. Do not offer contracts of less than one year.

✦Share the care of humanitarian staff by a psychologist in the event of a crisis (recruit one or several psychologists to provide care to several NGOs).

---

[50] Interview with members of civil society, Bouar, August 2017, and Bria, November 2017.
[51] Level 3 is the highest emergency level for the United Nations.

7. Table of Recommendations

Subject	*Objective*	Proposal
Security Environment	*To improve understanding of the security context*	Improve understanding of security dynamics by adding more indicators to the data collected by INSO and NGOs, notably the number of organizations in the interior of the country; the number and location of their staff, national and international; the number and type of road journeys undertaken, and their geographical distribution.
		Formulate scenarios on the development of the security context over the forthcoming six to twelve months and update them at least every three months.
	To improve NGO preparation for security risks	Conduct a survey of the ethnic and religious composition of NGO staff with the intention of adapting recruitment to the circumstances in intervention zones.
		Produce an NGO/UN/MINUSCA security tree in each sensitive zone.
		Appoint an international security manager in each NGO.
		Continue to train NGO national staff on humanitarian principles.
	To improve the response to incidents	Record the lessons learned from serious incidents and/or if an incident affects all NGOs. The results of the analysis should be shared with all organizations exposed to the same risks — on the basis of activity or geographical criteria — while ensuring great care is given to maintaining the confidentiality of sensitive information.
		Reinforce the practice of using assembly points in the event of a security risk.
		Strengthen internal communications channels between the field and the capital, especially in cases of collective incidents.
		Design a joint external communications strategy to respond to rumours disseminated among the local population, as well as explain humanitarian principles and provide information about NGO activities.

		After evacuation to a location for security reasons, clearly state the conditions that would make possible a return and the resumption of activity by all the NGOs that are involved.
	To improve coordination and communication systems	Use specific communication system for communicating security information (joint channel handset, WhatsApp, Skype, etc.).
		Formulate a security information confidentiality protocol.
		Avoid the presence of national NGOs and members of the security forces at meetings held to discuss sensitive security information (for example, the Humanitarian Forum and the CMCoord) and create an early warning system (for example, a mailing list/or text messages) specifically for national NGOs.
	To improve advocacy on humanitarian access	Review communications about the limitations to humanitarian access and make messages more positive: limitations on access could, for example, be presented as a growing challenge to which humanitarian organizations respond with limited resources. NGOs need to reformulate the message in a positive light by emphasizing that more financial resources might promote greater access.
	To improve engagement with the armed groups	NGOs should invest in strategies for engagement with the armed groups with a view to recovering crucial expertise on guaranteeing humanitarian access to remote areas of the country. NGOs should: (1) conduct mapping of armed actors in their area, including a curriculum vitae of the main leaders, their connections to local civil society and the history of their relations with NGOs; (2) regularly meet the main armed actors in their sector of activity to explain the organization's activities and answer questions; (3) regularly meet all members of the local civil society elite who might have influence over armed actors. To avoid the effects of turn-over, all this information should be the object of a rigorous debriefing between outgoing and incoming project managers. Reports on local engagement activities should be shared with Bangui and head office to involve them in improving the strategy.
		Conduct joint NGO missions in sensitive areas when sharing different experiences and expertise may facilitate access.
		Inform and train NGO staff on the conduct required when dealing with an armed group. INSO could organize regular training sessions on strategies for communicating and engaging with armed actors.

Legal Environment	*To avoid the introduction of a more difficult legal framework for NGOs*	Prepare the case against the new bill on NGOs, referring to: the impact of the administrative burden on the operational capacity of organizations; the operational and security consequences of violating the principles of independence and impartiality; the requirement to balance respect for state sovereignty with facilitation of the provision of humanitarian aid. The case should be completed by a detailed analysis of the actors who could influence the amendment and final approval of the bill.
		Meticulously and collectively prepare for a possible hearing on the bill at the National Assembly. This would provide a unique opportunity to communicate opinions on the provisions of the bill and to raise the awareness of deputies about humanitarian principles and the work of NGOs.
Political Environment	*To improve relations with the authorities*	Attend all coordination forums with local and national authorities
		Submit hard copy annual activity reports to local and national authorities, requiring confirmation of receipts
		Invite authorities to Project launch ceremonies
		Request quarterly SPONG meetings, which will bring together the CCO steering committee and representatives of national NGOs
		Systematize training sessions on humanitarian principles and the humanitarian coordination system delivered by OCHA to prefects, sub-prefects and national security force officers before their deployment in the provinces.
		Inform the local authorities (mayors) about humanitarian principles and the functioning of OCHA's operation of the humanitarian coordination system.
		Revive and publicize the civil servants day rates table and other costs of moving around.
		Calculate the additional costs of the financial and administrative harassment and share the costs of legal consultants.
		Prepare a study on the rulings by the administration and the courts on the main points of contention with NGOs in order to identify inconsistencies and strengthen the case put to the authorities.

		Continue asking the government to condemn attacks against humanitarian workers.
	For moving from subcontracting to partnership	Develop a training strategy for the CAR humanitarian sector with support from humanitarian training organizations. OCHA should pilot this task in association with interested donors.
		Clearly distinguish which CAR NGOs have humanitarian skills and which have community development skills to avoid asking the former to do the work of the latter and vice versa.
		Develop long-term partnerships in order to prepare CAR organizations to transition from being service providers to taking over the work currently done by international NGOs.
	To avoid confusion	Systematically record instances of confusion about the work of humanitarian workers and MINUSCA; organize meetings between relevant NGOs and MINUSCA to analyze these cases to help make the necessary decisions to limit negative consequences.
		Publicize the civil-military guidelines and monitor them.
		In the event of last recourse humanitarian intervention by MINUSCA, quickly prepare for NGOs to resume responsibility for humanitarian work.
		Argue for the decentralization of decision-making to MINUSCA's field offices in the event of a security crisis.
		Institutionalize a single channel of communication between NGOs and MINUSCA: to this end, CMCoord should be strengthened quickly so that it can be more effective in communicating information to avoid duplication of communication channels.
Financial Environment	*To strengthen the case to donors*	Help donors and the CAR authorities to understand the cost of insecurity by estimating the overall financial loss suffered by NGOs in 2017 and the cost of the support necessary to remain operational in the CAR.
	To improve emergency responses	Without neglecting the emergency response capacity of each NGO in its intervention zone, take steps to create a unique rapid country intervention mechanism along the lines of the RRM to ensure appropriate funding; broaden the field of intervention, by for example including food and health assistance; consider innovative implementation methods to be approved on a case-by-case basis,

		especially in difficult access zones (security and logistics); consolidate the transition between different phases, from evaluation of the initial response to monitoring in the following months.
		When drafting projects, include a specific line item in the budget to strengthen passive security at NGO bases and officers.
		Obtain drones to carry out aerial reconnaissance.
		Increase air transport capacities (helicopters, freight transport aircraft) for emergency responses in areas that are inaccessible by road. Humanitarian donors should make provision for a special disbursement dedicated to air transport use in emergency responses. The Humanitarian Country Team would be the decision-making body for activating this disbursement.
	To improve consortia	Encourage consortia based on complementarity of skills and not only on geographical complementarity.
		Organize a workshop to draw lessons from the experience of working as a consortium.
		Check that the conditions are in place for the consortium to work well (consensual coordination, complementarity of skills, shared understanding of the project and its risks, agreement on sharing the financial costs etc.).
	For adapting funding to the context of a long-term humanitarian crisis	Replace the six-month to one-year project approach for three-year framework agreements between humanitarian organizations and donors. Such a framework agreement would set humanitarian assistance objectives, select priority intervention zones and set a budget. As part of this agreement, humanitarian organizations would present an annual action plan to donors, which could discuss and amend the plan. This agreement would allow humanitarian organizations to adopt a funding plan similar to that of international NGOs and give greater flexibility in the management of their budget. That would also reduce the administrative burden, free up more time for monitoring and improve the quality of implementation.
		Explain to donors the need for them to take into account the time it takes for an NGO to establish itself in an area once it has been allocated funds.
		Make a joint case to donors to extend the funding period for humanitarian work and ask them to agree on a single format for project proposals.

		Argue for a readjustment of humanitarian and recovery funds to the advantage of the former.
Logistic Environment and Human Resources	*To reduce intervention delays and costs*	Fund the creation of a second logistical hub in one of the towns in western CAR at the start of 2018.
		Store emergency materials at the logistical hubs and develop stock management skills among interested humanitarian partners.
	To strengthen staff skills, retain staff and ensure psychological care	Develop training of national staff on emergency responses.
		Ensure the employment of experienced managers, make provisions for adequate contractual conditions, teamwork and wages to match the required experience. Do not offer contracts of less than one year.
		Share the care of humanitarian staff by a psychologist in the event of a crisis (recruit one or several psychologists to provide care to several NGOs).

8. Annexes

Type of organization	Organization	Name	Job
International NGOs	International Rescue Committee	Salma Ben Aissa	Deputy Director
	International Rescue Committee	Mohamed Chikahoui	Head of mission
	Mercy Corps	Rodolphe Moinaux	Head of mission
	Action contre la Faim	Benjamin Vienot	Head of mission
	International Medical Corps	Christian Mulamba	Head of mission
	International Medical Corps	Dr Clarke	Director of operations in Bria
	Catholic Relief Service	Christophe Droeven	Head of mission
	Handicap International	Andrea Trevisan	Head of mission
	Oxfam	Francis Ntessani	Head of mission
	Oxfam	Noel Zigani	Director of operations in Bria
	Oxfam	Brice Assangbe	Manager of the capacity building program
	Coopi	Lucien Amani	Director of operations in Bria
	MSF France	Fofana Diawari	Logistical coordinator in Bria
	MSF Spain	Caroline Ducarme	Head of mission
	First Emergency – International Medical Assistance	Camille Saulnier	Head of mission
	French Red Cross	Hamidou Goubakoye	Coordinator of opérations

	ICRC	Jean-François Sangsue	Head of mission
	INSO	Diana Berger	Deputy director
CAR NGOs	Coordination committee of the NGO in CAR	Staderini Duccio	Coordinator
	Working Group of the Civil Society	Valérie Tanga	
	United Youth for the Protection of the Environment and Community Development	Alexis Lewis	Executive director
	Women Leaders	Maimouna Voto	President of the Bria office
	Esperance	Mahamat Nour de-Balmer	Director of operations in Bria
	New Agricultural Development	Ahmat Kadre	Director of operations in Bria
Donors	ECHO	Patrick Wieland	Head of office
	ECHO	Tigwende Serge Soubeiga	Technical assistant
	UE Bekou Trust Fund	Davide Stefanini	Manager
	AFD (French Development Agency)	Pascal Brouillet	Head of office
	World Bank	Robert Bou Jaoude	Head of office
	USAID	Scott Hocklander	Head of office, based in Kinshasa
	Embassy of the United States	Todd Unterseher	Political and economic advisor
Nations Unies	OCHA	Karen Perrin	Deputy head of office
	OCHA	Daniel Ladouceur	Deputy head of office

	OCHA	Silke Banuelos-Kuang	CMCoord
	OCHA	Ali Abderahman Dawood	Head of the OCHA office in Bria
	MINUSCA	Kenny Gluck	Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary General
	MINUSCA	Lcol Moussa Diop Mboup	Head of operations
	MINUSCA	Viola Giuliani	JMAC Analyst
	MINUSCA	Amédée Amah	UNDSS Analyst
	UNHCR	Magatte Guisse	Représentant assistant chargé des opérations
	UNDP	Najat Rochdi	Humanitarian Coordinator and UNDP Representative
	World Health Organization	Dr Jean-Richard Balo	Head of office in Bria
State actors	SPONG, ministry of Planning	Jean-Louis Pouninguinza	Coordinator
	National Assembly	Karim Meckassoua	President
Armed groups	FRPC	Abdulaye Hissène	General
	FRPC	Azor	General
	UPC	Moussa	Spokesperson
	FRPC	Mahamat Ali	General
Various	Bangui University	Guy-Florent Ankogui-Mpoko	Professor
	Bangui	Patrick Marconnet	Businessman
	Issendele neighbourhood (Bornou area in Bria)	Abdul Hissene	Head of district

	Head of the mosque of the Bornou area in Bria		Imam
			52
	Head of the mosque of the Fadama area in Bria		Imam
	Elders council of Bria		President
	Reconciliation council of Bria		President

Bibliography

Articles

Barbelet V., *Central African Republic: addressing the protection crisis*, Humanitarian Policy Group Working Paper, Overseas Development Institute, November 2015.

Barrios C. *République Centrafricaine: Défis humanitaires, politiques et sécuritaires*, Institut d'Etudes de Sécurité de l'Union Européenne, October 2013.

Dorussen H., de Vooght M., *NGO Perceptions and Expectations of UN Peacekeeping*, University of Essex, 18 September 2017 (draft).

Haver K., S*tate of the Humanitarian System: Central African Republic field case study,* Humanitarian Outcomes, December 2014.

IRIN, *Bright ideas for better aid*, 17 August 2015.

IRIN, *The World Humanitarian Summit : Winners and Losers*, 26 May 2016.

Revue internationale de la Croix-Rouge, *Quels sont les défis futurs de l'action humanitaire ?*, Volume 93, 2011/3.

Books

Carayannis T., Lombard L. ed., *Making Sense of the Central African Republic*, Zed Books, July 2015.

Lionel P., *République centrafricaine : douanes et corruption, causes de la déliquescence du pays ?* L'Harmattan, 2015.

Renouf J.S., *Engage to stay and deliver, Humanitarian access in the Central African Republic*, monography, Norwegian Refugee Council, 2015.

Van Brabant K., *Operational Security Management in Violent Environments*, Humanitarian Practice Network Good Practice Review 8, 2010.

Reports

ACAPS, *Analyse des Besoins de la Crise en République centrafricaine*, January 2014.

CCO, *Private and Confidential NGO Policy Brief for UN Security Council Members ahead of the MINUSCA Mandate Renewal*, November 2017.

Danish Refugee Council, *Situation de la Transhumance en République centrafricaine suite aux crises de 2013 et 2014*, January 2015.

Doctors without Borders, *République Centrafricaine : une crise silencieuse*, November 2011.

Doctors without Borders, *République Centrafricaine : un pays abandonné à son sort ?*, July 2013.

Doctors without Borders, *Analyse de l'impact, de l'adaptation aux risques et de la réponse aux besoins en République centrafricaine*, July 2014.

European Court of Auditors, *The EU Bekou Trust Fund for the Central African Republic: a hopeful beginning despite some shortcomings*, September 2017.

FDFA, ICRC, OCHA, CDI, *Humanitarian Access in Situations of Armed Conflict*, Handbook on the International Normative Framework, December 2014.

ICVA, *The Role of the Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator*, an independent study, 2017.

International Rescue Committee, *Too Soon to Turn Away : Security, Governance and Humanitarian Needs in the Central African Republic*, July 2015.

International Peace Information Service & Danish Institute for International Studies, *The Politics of Pillage: the Political Economy of Roadblocks in the Central African Republic*, November 2017.

Norwegian Refugee Council, *Engage to stay and deliver: Humanitarian Access in the Central African Republic*, 2015.

OCHA, *Central African Republic Crisis and its Regional Humanitarian Impact*, 2014.

Oxfam, *Fresh analysis de la capacité humanitaire en République centrafricaine*, April 2015.

United Nations, *Emergency Directors Mission in CAR : Summary Report*, October 2013.

United Nations, *International Peer Review : Response to the Crisis in the Central African Republic*, 23 March 2014.

United Nations, *Country Specific Guidelines for Civil-Military Coordination between Humanitarian Actors and MINUSCA in the Central African Republic*, 3 October 2017.

United Nations Security Council, Resolution 2387 (2017), 15 November 2017.

Documents of the CAR government

Decree 06.155 of 10 May 2006, « Décret portant sur l'application de la loi 02.004 du 21 mai 2002 régissant les organisations non gouvernementales en République centrafricaine ».

Draft law about the NGOs in the CAR, February 2016.

Draft law about the NGOs in the CAR, text sent to the National Assembly on July 2017.