Standard Project Report 2015

Reporting Period: 1 January - 31 December 2015

CENTRAL AFRICA REPUBLIC

Logistics Support to WFP operations, and Logistics & Emergency Telecommunications Cluster Augmentation in Central African Republic

Project Number	200605
Project Category	Single Country Special Operation

Project Approval Date	25 Oct 2013		**Approved budget as 31 December 2015 in USD**	
Planned Start Date	01 Jul 2013		**Capacity Dev.t and Augmentation**	11,550,298
Actual Start Date	15 Jul 2013		**Direct Support Costs**	2,338,948
Project End Date	30 Apr 2016		**Indirect Support Costs**	972,247
Financial Closure Date	n.a.		**Total Approved Budget**	14,861,493

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Country Overview

COUNTRY BACKGROUND

The Central African Republic is a landlocked, sparsely populated country with 4.6 million inhabitants. Despite its high agricultural and mineral wealth, the country ranks 187 out of 188 in the 2015 Human Development Index (HDI). The main factor impeding development has been social-political instability, a consequence of recurring coup d'etats and armed conflicts during the past three decades.

Since the end of 2012, widespread insecurity increased as the ex-Seleka coalition staged an offensive against the government and seized power in March 2013. Retaliation measures by the anti-Balaka militia produced renewed clashes in the country and the introduction of additional actors and external de-stabilizing forces added further pressure on the population, which led to countrywide attacks and provoked unprecedented inter-communal violence.

The crisis in the Central African Republic has led to massive population displacements and severe humanitarian and economic implications as livelihoods and trade have been disrupted or destroyed. The intensification of sectarian clashes triggered significant population movements and by September 2015, nearly 20 percent of the population remained displaced with 399,000 internally displaced and nearly 442,100 refugees in neighbouring countries. Household assets and reserves are being depleted and the scale and severity of the food insecurity levels among the population are unprecedented. The presidential and legislative elections took place on 30 December 2015 and a second round is scheduled in end of January 2016.

As a result of these multiple shocks, the 2015 Emergency Food Security Assessment (EFSA) released in December 2015 in C.A.R. show that an estimated 2.5 million people, or half of the population, are moderately or severely food insecure. Specifically, 15 percent of the population is severely food insecure. This is a catastrophic deterioration compared to results of the EFSA conducted in September 2014 when 1.3 million people were affected.

The August 2014 SMART (Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions) survey found that stunting prevalence in the country exceeded 40 percent in 9 of the 16 districts, compared to GAM rates that did not exceed 6.6 percent nationally. The levels of acute malnutrition among women is reported at less than 5 percent at national level.

The market situation in C.A.R. remains volatile, and overall demand has decreased over the past year according to interviewed traders. Particularly in rural areas, high transportation costs during the rainy season, coupled with increased insecurity, trade disruptions and a significant lower demand due to depleted purchasing power, have reduced food availability and trade.

According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), some 2.7 million people required humanitarian assistance as of December 2015.

SUMMARY OF WFP ASSISTANCE

WFP assistance in Central African Republic focused on improving the food security and nutrition situation of the displaced and vulnerable populations throughout the country. The activities supported Millennium Development Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.

WFP interventions in the Central African Republic are aligned with national policies for agriculture, food security, nutrition and education as well as the 2015 Strategic Response Plan.

Through the regional EMOP 200799, WFP in C.A.R. provided food assistance to the conflict affected populations through general food distributions, food for asset recovery activities. Cash-Based Transfer (CBT) activities and Purchase for Progress (P4P) were piloted and scaled up during the year. WFP provided blank supplementary feeding for affected households with children aged 6-59 months and treatment services of moderately acute malnourished children aged 6-59 months and pregnant and lactating women. WFP also provided school meals to children among internally displaced and affected host communities through emergency school feeding programmes.

WFP's Humanitarian Air Services (UNHAS) in C.A.R. provides vital and flexible air services for humanitarian actors to ensure safe access to beneficiaries and implementation sites. It also conducts medical evacuations and staff security relocations, with a fleet of two LET410 aircrafts of 17 seats each and one DASH8/100 of 35 seats.

The Logistics and Emergency Telecommunication (ETC) operation aims to increase the logistics and emergency telecommunication capacities; the ETC provides secure and reliable data as well as radio and telecommunication network services and internet access for the humanitarian community. The Logistics Cluster supports partners with information on transport movement plans, inventory on warehousing and fuel storage capacities, and identifies logistics gaps and constraints. The cluster also coordinates road and bridge rehabilitation projects.

Beneficiaries	**Male**	**Female**	**Total**
Number of children below 5 years of age	102,167	118,375	220,542
Number of children 5 to 18 years of age	168,762	188,471	357,233
Number of adults	145,209	200,048	345,257
Total number of beneficiaries in 2015	416,138	506,894	923,032
Total number of beneficiaries in 2014	773,990	863,808	1,637,798
Total number of beneficiaries in 2013	342,569	325,588	668,157

Distribution (mt)						
Project Type	**Cereals**	**Oil**	**Pulses**	**Mix**	**Other**	**Total**
Regional EMOP	24,023	1,775	5,119	6,368	444	37,729
Total food distributed in 2015	24,023	1,775	5,119	6,368	444	37,729
Total food distributed in 2014	29,305	1,580	4,093	4,407	216	39,601
Total food distributed in 2013	9,139	753	1,798	693	285	12,667

Operational SPR

OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES AND RELEVANCE

The Central African Republic (C.A.R.) is one of the most complex, difficult, and costly operating environments in the world. Poor infrastructure and competition for limited logistics assets negatively impact the humanitarian response, and very limited access to surface level transport hampers the effective and timely delivery of humanitarian assistance. Additionally, ongoing insecurity and active violence have led to further disintegration of the already weak road network in C.A.R., contributing to increased isolation of communities in need.

The main objective of Special Operation (SO) 200605 (Logistics Support to WFP Operations, and Logistics and Telecommunications Cluster Augmentation in Central African Republic) is to ensure a continued and coordinated logistics response for the ongoing emergency and an efficient utilization of resources and logistics capacity through the cluster approach.

Specifically, this SO aimed to achieve the following objectives: (1) provide logistics coordination and information management (IM) services to ensure the humanitarian community has the ability to respond to needs in a timely and efficient manner and to maximize the utilization of logistics assets; (2) facilitate the provision of essential warehousing services in critical areas as requested by the humanitarian community; (3) conduct trainings on warehousing for Non-Food Items (NFIs), in order to boost capacity within humanitarian organizations and to maximize the utilization of storage facilities; (4) facilitate the rehabilitation of critical infrastructures (bridges and airstrips); (5) carry out a field Lessons Learned Exercise in C.A.R, serving the dual objectives of accountability and learning; and (6) ensure comprehensive and reliable emergency telecommunications and data connectivity networks and services for the entire humanitarian community.

RESULTS

'Story Worth Telling'

The WFP-led Logistics Cluster worked together with the Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED) to implement a project for road infrastructure rehabilitation in order to improve humanitarian access to populations in C.A.R.

The project catered for the creation of an emergency Mobile Intervention Brigade, which worked in close collaboration with the Logistics Cluster. The Mobile Intervention Brigade was in charge of registering alerts on critical road infrastructures collected by partners on the field; the alerts were then centralised by the Logistics Cluster, in charge of validating and prioritizing them through its network of partners. Throughout the process, stocks were meant to be pre-positioned in strategic cities across the country, to allow, after the validation of the alerts, a rapid response (within 30 days) by the Mobile Intervention Brigade. The unstable security conditions, however, did not allow for the pre-positioning of stocks, and the activities had to be halted on several occasions, as it was not possible to deploy staff on the ground.

Notwithstanding the external challenges, this rapid, performing and highly participative mechanism permitted the prompt rehabilitation of more than 30 road infrastructures (bridges, culverts and ferries) which have been deemed crucial by humanitarian actors to restore access to beneficiaries.

From May to July 2015, the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster conducted intensive radio training for users in C.A.R. A team comprising of one international telecommunications officer and two national telecommunications technicians carried out this training in Bangui, Bambari, Paoua, Bossangoa and Bouar. National staff assisted with the translation from French to Sango, the local dialect, to ensure training objectives were clear and achieved. Trainees highly appreciated this initiative, making the training sessions very engaging and interactive. For some humanitarian workers, mostly from the NGO community, it was the very first time they had used a VHF and/or HF radio. In total, some 330 humanitarian workers were trained by the ETC in 2015 and the demand for trainings continues to increase. During the escalation of violence in September 2015 in Bangui, the security telecommunications network proved to be vital as the humanitarian personnel received security updates through radio broadcasted messages from UNDSS. UN staff across the city were also able to use their VHF radios to call for help.

Outputs

In 2015, WFP remained the lead agency for the coordination of the Logistics and ET Clusters, managing and sharing relevant information for its partners, and providing essential common services to the humanitarian community. WFP deployed a Logistics Cluster coordinator, an ETC coordinator and an Information Management Officer to engage with humanitarian partners in C.A.R.; to avoid duplication of efforts and competition for assets and services; and to identify logistics gaps, bottlenecks and needs, ensuring they are appropriately addressed. The Logistics and the ET Clusters held regular meetings throughout the year. The Logistics Cluster provided several information management and GIS services, ensuring timely and relevant logistics information was shared with the humanitarian community. The Logistics Cluster website also dedicated a page to the operation, regularly updated and maintained, which proved to be a vital tool extensively used for operational information sharing and management. The ETC provided remote information management support to ensure activities were accurately captured and reported to the humanitarian community and key decision makers.

To enhance emergency response management knowledge and to build capacity among logistics warehousing staff, the Logistics Cluster organised a warehouse management training in April 2015.

WFP partnered with the Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED) to undertake infrastructure rehabilitation activities. Through two different projects in 2015, ACTED rehabilitated 77 infrastructures (bridges, ferries and crossing points) on the axis Grimari - Kouanga, Bossemptele - Bozoum - Paoua, Bozoum - Bocaranga and Bozoum - Bossangoa, identified by partners as critical in terms of humanitarian needs. Although the activities planned had to be postponed in some cases due to insecurity, the number of road infrastructures rehabilitated greatly exceeded the initial target. The projects allowed to overcome numerous logistics bottlenecks and to facilitate access to people affected by insecurity in the targeted areas. To establish the feasibility of rehabilitation activities, 10 engineering assessments had been planned; however, due to insecurity and to the fact that a number of critical bridges requiring rehabilitation had already been identified by partners, only seven of them were carried out.

Following an escalation of violence in September 2015, a critical need to strengthen common warehouse services, and to coordinate the movement of humanitarian cargo was identified. In December 2015, WFP partnered with the international NGO Handicap International to facilitate the provision of common storage and transport services for the entire humanitarian community. The project is expected to run until April 2016. The rehabilitation of airstrips is also a critical component of this project; the Logistics Cluster facilitated this activity in 2015, and will continue to do so in 2016. The ETC also endured security challenges that caused delays and reprioritization of activities. Nevertheless, services under the ETC were provided and maintained in eight common operational areas (Bangui, Kaga Bandoro, Bambari, Zemio, N'dele, Paoua, Bossangoa, Bouar). Security communications (VHF/HF radio network) for humanitarian staff and assets were provided in Bangui, Bossangoa, Bouar, Bambari, Paoua, N'Dele, Kaga Bandoro and Zemio; Internet access was provided in Bossangoa, Bouar, Paoua, Bambari, Kaga Bandoro, N'Dele and Zemio.

In 2015, the ETC established one radio room in N'Dele. The two radio rooms planned for Zemio and Bria were not set up as the expected needs did not arise.

Despite the critical funding and staffing constraints, the ETC continued to provide humanitarian organizations with emergency telecommunication services, such as troubleshooting, HF/VHF radio programming, radio users training, technical advice and information sharing in Bangui.

Output	Unit	Planned	Actual	% Actual vs. Planned
SO 1: Special Operations (Cluster)				
Number of agencies and organizations using Logistics coordination services	no.	46	60	130.4%
Number of operational radio rooms (COMCENs) set up	no.	3	1	33.3%
Number of UN agency/NGO staff members trained in radio communications	no.	300	330	110.0%
Number of UN operational areas covered by common security telecommunication network	no.	2	1	50.0%
Number of UN operational areas covered by data connectivity	no.	7	7	100.0%
SO 1: Special Operations (Logistics)				
Number of engineering access assessments	no.	10	7	70.0%
Number of Mobile Storage Units set up	no.	4	3	75.0%
Number of warehouse management trainings organized	no.	1	1	100.0%
SO 1: Special Operations (Rehabilitation)				
Number of airstrips rehabilitated	no.	1	1	100.0%
Number of road infrastructures rehabilitated	no.	42	77	183.3%

Outcomes

In 2015, the implementation of SO 200605 ensured efficient and coordinated logistics and ETC support to the humanitarian community.

Both logistics and ETC services significantly impacted the ability of the humanitarian community to conduct relief operations in conflict-affected areas in a more effective and timely manner, limiting duplication of efforts and maximizing the use of available resources. Cluster coordination mechanisms were successfully implemented, and proved essential for inter-agency collaboration as well as collaboration with United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

In line with previous year's activities, the Logistics Cluster regularly updated the overview of partners' existing logistics capacity and compiled and quantified partners' feedback regarding identified logistics gaps and major constraints which could hamper or jeopardize an efficient humanitarian supply chain. Through these evaluations, key issues and concerns identified by partners were analysed and, when possible, addressed. Among the needs identified, partners reported that warehousing, transport, poor road infrastructures, and provision of fuel and gas in CAR remains problematic. The Logistics Cluster has successfully facilitated access to these services in 2015. Additionally, the preparation of an emergency contingency plan started at the end of 2015 and is currently ongoing.

Under the leadership of the ETC, UN agencies coordinated the redeployment so that one agency served as lead and host agency in each operational area, providing internet connectivity and VHF radio communications. This lowered the overall costs for the humanitarian community and reduced the risk of having unattended equipment looted. This partial handing over of common services has permitted the ETC to implement a model of activities that has been deemed more sustainable in the long term.

Overall, the coordination mechanisms established through this SO resulted in a better emergency response and achieved the outcome of supporting the humanitarian community in delivering life-saving relief items to the population affected by the conflict.

Overall, the services provided by WFP through the augmentation of logistics and telecommunications capacity under this project were essential to support the humanitarian response in the country.

This project was extended until April 2016, and it is expected that a new SO will be prepared, as a phase-down of the operation and handover to the government is not yet envisioned. A new SO will enable WFP to continue improving emergency logistics response and training local stakeholders in logistics operations and response. Activities aimed at strengthening local GIS capacities have been deemed crucial by local stakeholders, and will be considered.

Given the unstable situation in the country, WFP support continues to be required, to ensure sustainability of project activities and capacity in the logistics and telecommunications sectors. The Logistics Cluster will continue to facilitate access to common services and to address logistics gaps and bottlenecks, benefitting the entire humanitarian community and leading to the establishment of a more efficient logistics sector. Likewise, cooperation with partners in the field of infrastructure maintenance and rehabilitation will be maintained, and further expanded.

In the event of a future phase out of the clusters, ETC and logistics coordination would be mainstreamed into regular working group meetings.

MANAGEMENT

Partnerships

The Logistics and ET Clusters provided, and facilitated the access to, services for the entire humanitarian community in C.A.R.

Through regular meetings attended by humanitarian organisations, the Logistics Cluster supported coordination amongst all its partners. Coordination, and information sharing, helped partners to optimize the use of resources available at regional and local levels, and to identify gaps, while avoiding duplications of efforts.

Additionally, WFP, as the lead agency of the Logistics Cluster, partnered with two international NGOs, ACTED and Handicap International; the first partnership allowed ACTED, which was identified as the only partner possessing the required skills, expertise and staff to undertake bridge rehabilitation activities on secondary road networks around the country's main humanitarian hubs. Through the partnership with Handicap International, free storage and transport services have been made available to the entire humanitarian community in C.A.R., addressing a need that has been deemed crucial by all actors on the ground.

Participation and inclusion being paramount to achieve its mandate, to provide timely and reliable logistics service support and information to the entire humanitarian community, the architecture of the Logistics Cluster in CAR has envisioned the presence of a co-facilitator. The task was initially undertaken by the international NGO Premiere Urgence - Aide Medicale International, which was substituted over the course of 2015 by Handicap International.

Based on agreements reached in 2013, the ETC was able to have one organization serving as host agency in operational areas: UNWFP in Bouar, Bambari and Paoua, UNICEF in Bossangoa and Kaga Bandoro, UNHCR in Zemio. The ET Cluster held regular meetings with partners in the field, as well monthly coordination meetings in Bangui. The ET Cluster also ensured technical support to partners and humanitarian staff on the ground, including radio programming and training, to allow a better use of the services offered by the ET Cluster. Organizations which benefited from ETC services included, but were not limited to, Save the Children, Handicap International, Plan International, French Red Cross, World Vision, ACF, ACTED, International NGO Safety Organization (INSO), NRC, OCHA, UNDP, UNDSS, UNICEF and WFP.

Lessons Learned

In November 2015, the Logistics Cluster carried out a field Lessons Learned exercise in C.A.R., serving the dual objectives of accountability and learning. The exercise reported on the quality and results of the activities undertaken by the Logistics Cluster since it activation in 2013, and drew lessons to help in further implementation.

Key challenges for the implementation of this SO were linked to the unstable security situation in the country, as well as to the inaccessibility of certain regions during the rainy season.

Interventions for maintaining or rehabilitating infrastructures required not only funds, materials and skilled personnel, but also a safe environment to achieve adequate results. Activities had sometimes to be postponed, as the insecure environment did not allow the deployment of staff on the ground.

There is a continued need for secured storage facilities, in Bangui as well as in the provinces, where UN agencies' premises, as well as NGOs, are often looted and attacked. Delivering relief items in the country is also extremely challenging, as convoys, even when travelling under armed escorts, are likely to be attacked by armed groups. Common storage facilities, and coordinated and consolidated movement of humanitarian cargo still appear as the most viable options to address these logistics bottlenecks.

Within the ETC component, human resources remained a challenge for ETC, as local expertise was difficult to find in C.A.R.; additionally, the ETC faced throughout the year very critical funding constraints, which negatively impacted the implementation of its projects.

To finalize the implementation of the project and to respond to the additional needs caused by the crisis in September 2015, the project was extended into 2016.