FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

Final evaluation of the 'Alternatives to Violence: Strengthening Youth-Led Peacebuilding in the Central African Republic' project

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Submitted 17 November 2020

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Glossary

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Executive summary

Introduction and project overview

This executive summary provides on overview of the 'Alternatives to Violence: Strengthening Youth-Led Peacebuilding in the Central African Republic' project, and the main findings and recommendations of the final project evaluation. The project was supported by the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (UNPBF) and implemented by War Child UK (WCUK), Conciliation Resources (CR) and two local implementing partners in-country, namely Femme Homme Action Plus (FHAP) and l'Association pour l'Action Humanitaire en Centrafrique (AAHC).

The project was implemented over a period of 21 months in Paoua and Bossangoa in the northwest of the Central African Republic (CAR). Its objective was to improve the wellbeing of young people, increase social cohesion, and strengthen youth participation in peac

marginalised in peace interventions. The livelihoods component in particular was relevant to young people moving through life phases and seeking increased independence from caregivers.

The project was well timed in that

budget allocated to support its implementation. Consortium partners may also have considered adapting the livelihoods component to include fewer participants.

<u>Contributions to youth participation in peacebuilding and policymaking</u> included increased skills, a sense of empowerment, improved understanding of peace and conflict, and strengthened relationships between young people and authorities and policymakers that are likely to outlast the project. Young people were supported towards becoming young leaders, however, they indicated that support and facilitation was still required from consortium and implementing partners. Finally, consortium field staff suggest that the project could have been more gender responsive by actively encouraging the participation of young women. Future and more longer-term programming would also benefit from including a religious lens to address conflict divides between the (predominantly Christian) population of Bossangoa and displaced Muslim communities.

Recommendations for strengthening programme design, implementation and outcomes:

WCUK, WCUK Bangui and WCUK field offices consult with each other and agree strategies to mitigate challenges related to communication.

Engage all relevant staff and stakeholders in the project design phase, to incorporate their expertise and experience, and to anticipate potential challenges. Refrain from wanting to do too much and to include too many components in a project. Keep the project framework simple and realistic, and ensure the budget is sufficient for the effective and full implementation of all project components.

Explore the assumptions of young people around peacebuilding and their participation, and take them into account as part of the project design – including plans to mitigate these assumptions where they may limit the project's outcomes.

Continue to seek the engagement and participation of young people who have already received training as part of this project. Going forward, consider how partners can enhance youth leadership skills and support young people who are motivated to lead.

Think about how consortium partners might move towards a youth-led programme, while remaining conscious of the 2runlprojs to d (i)7(avig(on)15( )]TJETQq0.000008871 0 595.32 841.92 reW*nB

Brainstorm key concepts such as wellbeing, youth participation and peacebuilding, and explore what they might mean in practice. Check and validate assumptions by including young people and other relevant stakeholders in the process.

Chapter 1: Introduction to the evaluation

STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the

contribution to this agenda is the inclusion of youth in peacebuilding efforts, and specifically youth living in remote areas that are not otherwise included in peacebuilding efforts.

In total, the project reached 600 beneficiaries directly, of which half (300) were young people associated with armed groups, and half (300) were other vulnerable youth. From this total, 40 young people were selected to become young peacebuilding leaders (referred to in this report as young leaders) – 20 in each of the two sub-prefectures. A different group of 40 young people (20 in each project location) participated in the VoiceMore youth advocacy programme. For the livelihoods component, 300 young people, comprised of 60 groups of five, participated in either vocational training or entrepreneurship training. All 600 young people participated in the DEALS life skills trainings.

The project kicked off on 21-23 January 2019 with a workshop in Bangui attended by WCUK, CR,

(ii) To what extent did livelihoods programming and economic activities contribute to peacebuilding outcomes?

(iii) To what extent did the project contribute to meaningful

The evaluation methodologies were qualitative, which means that the findings are largely based on anecdotal evidence. The consultants trust the views of young people and other stakeholders and do not have reason to question their contributions. However, because quantitative data collection was not done, it is impossible to know and to evaluate to what extent, for example, skill development among young people was achieved. This is why, for example, the consultants were less able to identify the extent to which young people's livelihoods skills had increased.

The consultancy team was unable to engage with decision-makers from the inter-ministerial body responsible for Disarmament, Demobilisation, Reintegration (DDR) and the Ministry of Humanitarian Action and National Reco

Chapter 2: Findings and analyses

This chapter considers to what extent the project achieved its intended outcomes, and analyses the contributions made by different factors and elements of the project to the actual outcomes. Each sub-section examines one of the two planned outcomes, and begins with a diagram that illustrates the relationships between key elements of the project, and how different elements interacted and contributed to the relevant outcome. Where an element made a positive contribution to the outcome, this is shown by a green line; limited contributions are shown in red; and mixed contributions in black. This is followed by a number of contribution stories that explore how particular factors and project components contributed to outcomes, in both positive and negative ways.

OUTCOME 1 - RELATIONSHIPS ACROSS CONFLICT DIVISIONS, AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES AT A COMMUNITY LEVEL AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO VIOLENCE ARE STRENGTHENED
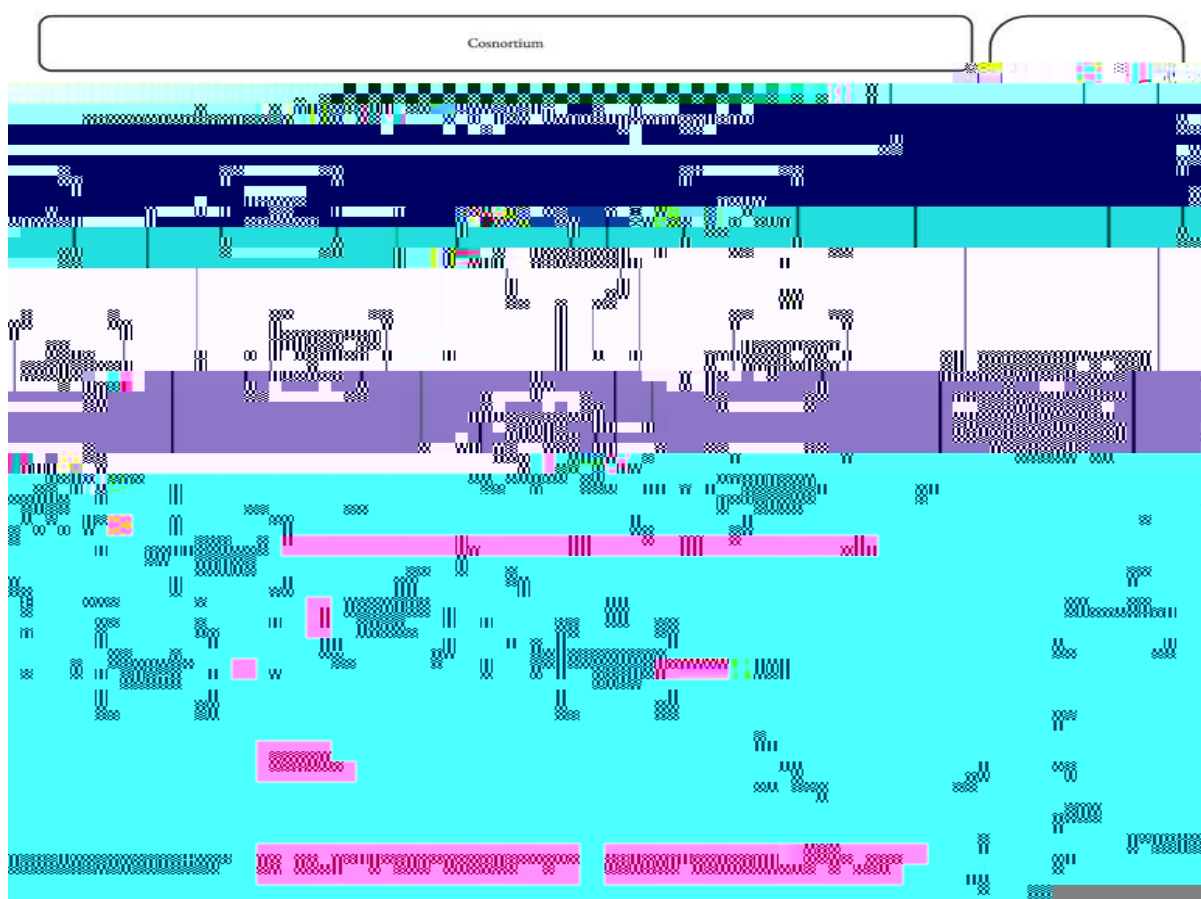
The consortium contributed positively to the outcome

This project was the first time WCUK and CR had worked together in a consortium. A monitoring and evaluation (M&E) workshop held in April 2019 allowed both partners to reflect on findings from the baseline report and revise the ToC. Partners reported that the workshop contributed to a shared understanding of the project and its objectives.

Each partner appreciated the expertise brought by the other partner, which was seen as an added value: WCUK's expertise in livelihoods and psychosocial wellbeing, and CR's in advocacy and peacebuilding. Consortium partners did not work in silos, but rather sought to complement each other in the project's implementation by

Root causes of conflict were addressed through the conflict analysis training and action plan development. Young people gained an understanding of why conflict arose and how conflict manifested itself in society, communities and public spaces, such as the market space. At the end of the training, young people were able to identify and analyse conflicts in their communities. Based on their understanding of causes of conflict, young people developed action plans which they went on to implement at community level.

Community outreach contributed to increased dialogue, understanding and wellbeing of young people

Young people who received DEALS and conflict analysis training applied their skills in peer

Forty young leaders – 20 in Paoua and 20 in Bossangoa – received training in peacebuilding methods. These young leaders were then tasked with returning to their respective communes and to train a further 20 young people to become leaders for peace in their communities. However, due to a lack of time, the high number of villages in some communes, and distances between villages, young leaders said they did not manage to reach young people in all villages. Young leaders said that the project timeframe should have been longer to enable them to undertake all their planned outreach activities.

CR and implementing partners had regular meetings and follow-up activities with young leaders after training. Young leaders emphas21ry g0 Gs0.0s TJETQq0.000008871 0 595.92 reW*ħBT/F1 11.04 Tf1 0 0 1

The livelihoods component of the project was relevant to young people in that increased socio-economic wellbeing may contribute to long-term outcomes such as reintegration and social cohesion through interaction in community spaces like the market. It also reinforces other components of the project: for example, trainings that support vocational training or entrepreneurship can create spaces where young people from different backgrounds may come

livelihoods component suffered a six-month delay – one-third of the project's original 18-month timeframe.

Budget limitations – and the resulting redesign of the livelihoods component – meant that group activities were prioritised, and resources for entrepreneurial support had to be shared within groups. In theory, group work has its benefits: from a risk management perspective, group work may prove safer because responsibility for resources is shared among several individuals; and it can create opportunities for peacebuilding through the dialogue, tolerance and flexibility required to work in groups.

However, eight out of 14 workshop participants who had received entrepreneurial training reported feeling frustrated and annoyed by the changes to processes and plans throughout the implementation period. S

At the same time, young people, supported by CR, were able to see the pandemic as an opportunity to further promote peacebuilding and social cohesion in their communities. Building on their conflict analysis and action plan development from July 2019, young people analysed the effects of COVID-19 on conflict and violence in their communes. They identified that COVID-19 could lead to increased frustrations among people and therefore increased violence; that it could complicate communication with local leaders, meaning that accountability would be affected; and that conflict resolution around water points would become even more pressing, as access to clean water is essential during the pandemd

Contributions towards the creation of an enabling environment for youth participation

A major contribution of the project was the creating and shaping of an enabling environment for youth-led peacebuilding. Key to this were the various trainings mentioned in the previous sub-section and their contributions to youth empowerment – including young people's increased ability to understand and change conflict, and their facilitation of community dialogues and dialogue for conflict mitigation.

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Chapter 3: Conclusions and recommendations

This chapter assesses to what extent the project achieved its overall objective of strengthened youth participation, improved wellbeing of young people, and increased social cohesion. It considers the relevance and effectiveness of the project, and how the project's components came together to contribute to the overall objective. The chapter concludes with recommendations that aim to support learning and to strengthen future programming.

OVERALL OBJECTIVE - STRENGTHENED YOUTH PARTICIPATION, IMPROVED WELLBEING OF YOUNG PEOPLE,

meaningfully engage young people in peacebuilding, as long as effective frameworks and tools, such as action planning, are employed.

The project did particularly well in supporting youth empowerment and youth participation in peacebuilding and advocacy at (sub-)prefectural levels. Key to this were trainings that gave young people the skills and support necessary to (i) engage and share knowledge with peers and community members, (ii) mitigate and mediate conflict through dialogue, and (iii) participate effectively in advocacy with authorities. Community outreach and advocacy activities provided opportunities for resolving misunderstandings between young people associated with armed groups and other vulnerable young people, and misplaced assumptions about NGO interventions and peacebuilding processes. In turn, this helped to sever the vicious cycle of conflict and violence.

In addition, young people reported that, as a result of the above-mentioned components and outcomes, there was more social cohesion in communities; authorities and community members were more inclined to listen to them and take on board their messages; and that young people who previously felt left out have regained a sense of dignity and belonging in their communities, either through commerce or as young leaders.

Contributions of the livelihoods component to peacebuilding outcomes were limited

All of the project components had a role to play in contributing to increased wellbeing of young people, social cohesion, and youth participation in policymaking and peacebuilding. However, the livelihoods component was the only element of the project aimed specifically at contributing to the *socio-economic* wellbeing of young people.

As outlined in Chapter 2 under Outcome 1, the livelihoods component of the project faced challenges in implementation, including ineffective communication between WCUK field and country offices, insufficient budget allocation, and delays which were exacerbated in later phases of the project by the COVID-19 outbreak. Considering these challenges and their impact on the trainings, distribution of kits and follow-up with young people, consortium partners would have done well to have reduced the number of participants when implications of budget constraints first became clear.

Contributions to meaningful youth participation were considerable

Several of the project's outcomes are likely to be sustainable over the long term, namely: improved skills and behaviours that young people have internalised through the DEALS, conflict analysis and peacebuilding trainings; the changed views of authorities and decision-makers, who now see the potential of young people and their added value; and improvements in intergenerational relations, such as relations between community decision-makers and young people.

These skills and relationships are unlik58 Te(g)-5.35.ET.04 T.68 T]TJETQch were exacerbate

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been created, in which peers, community members and authorities at different levels listen and take young people's opinions and messages of peace seriously, and this seems likely to endure.

However, though partners provided training and support for young people to develop action plans and facilitate community outreach, young people argued that more support would have been helpful and they did not feel ready to lead the whole process of community dialogues themselves. Hence, while the project contributed positively to youth leadership, it did not reach a level where young people felt they were no longer dependent on external support.

Considerations around gender and religious assumptions may have strengthened the project

Finally, the consultancy team considered which types of young people participated in the project and who did not, and how this may have impacted project outcomes. The project identified and included both young people who were associated with armed groups and other vulnerable youth. There were considerable advantages to bringing these two groups together

that if contributions had been different, how they might have been different depending on various mitigation measures and possible implementation processes and how that might have affected the outcome. Lastly, discuss how these insights might affect contributions to outcomes and future projects.

As consortium partners are looking to seek funding for a follow-on programme, consider organising a workshop with all partners that will allow for discussion and learning. An outcome of the workshop need not be a design or idea for a project but might be a shared understanding of a given topic, such as youth-led peacebuilding. Such an understanding could help to improve communica

This annex includes details of the 'Alternatives to Violence' project Theory of Change (ToC). It includes the original ToC as well as the revised ToC, as per the M&E workshop facilitated by CR.

Image 1: original ToC (September 2018)
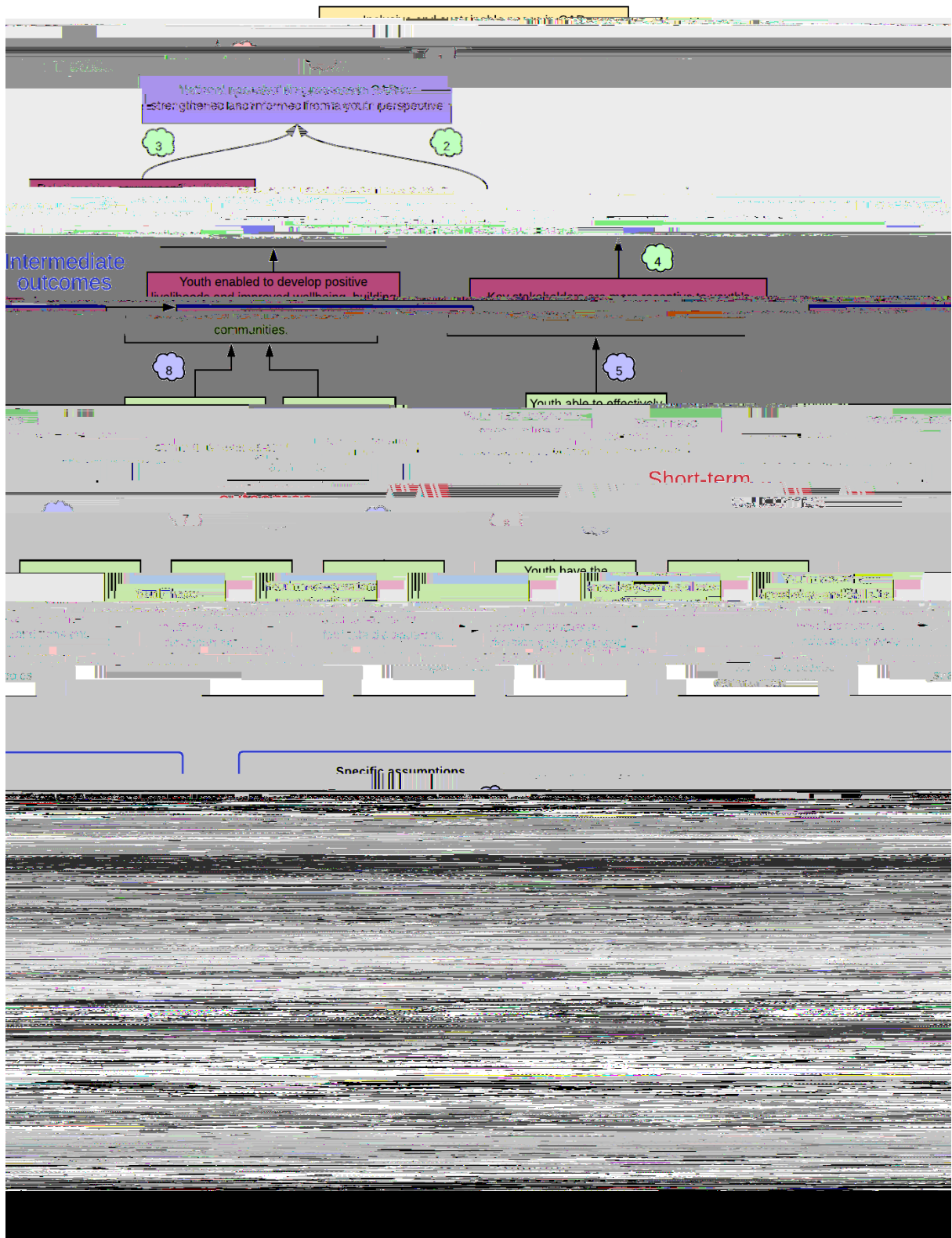
Annex 2: Overview of evaluation participants

This annex includes an overview of the types of evaluation participants and how many of each were included in the evaluation process. Because the consultancy team adheres to privacy laws, names are not included in this overview.

Table 1: Overview of evaluation participants

Type of evaluation participant	Number of participants per type
Young workshop participants – Paoua	10
Young workshop participants – Bossangoa	10
(Young) community members through peer-to-peer evaluation	20
WCUK staff London	3
WCUK staff Bangui	2
WCUK staff Paoua	2
WCUK staff Bossangoa	1
CR staff London	2
CR team members CAR, including consultant	3
FHAP staff members	1
AAHC staff members	2
(Sub-)prefectural decision-makers	10
National decision-makers	1
Total number of evaluation participants	67