

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) has commissioned through the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) an evaluation of the PBF portfolio in the Central African Republic (CAR) from 2014 through 2018/2019. CAR has been on the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) since 2008. Considering the importance of CAR for the PBF and that it had not conducted any evaluations in the country since 2012, the scope of this evaluation covers the PBF portfolio of 14 projects, representing a total budget of USD 42.3 million, disbursed in two phases: 2014-2016 and 2016-2018/19. The purpose of this evaluation is to analyze the results, their impact on peacebuilding, as well as the governance and supervision mechanisms established by the PBF. To this end, the PBF has contracted a team of consultants consisting of a team leader, a peacebuilding expert, and a national expert who undertook this evaluation from July to November 2019.

### Context

In the course of its history, CAR has experienced several coups d'Etat<sup>1</sup> and went through a first civil war from 2003 to 2007. At the end of 2012, a second civil war broke out triggered by the Séléka<sup>2</sup> movement, a coalition of rebel groups from the North of the country, which took power under Michel Djotodia, who proclaimed himself President in March 2013. The Government of the Séléka coalition was never able to impose its rule across the country and ended up resigning in January 2014, leaving behind dysfunctional institutions, a drained treasury and a divided country. A transition government was appointed in January 2014 to lead the country back to peace and organize democratic elections in 2015. In September 2014, the African Union peacekeeping mission (MISCA – Mission Internationale de Soutien à la Centrafrique sous conduite Africaine) was replaced by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, or MINUSCA (Mission Multidimensionnelle Intégrgovernment

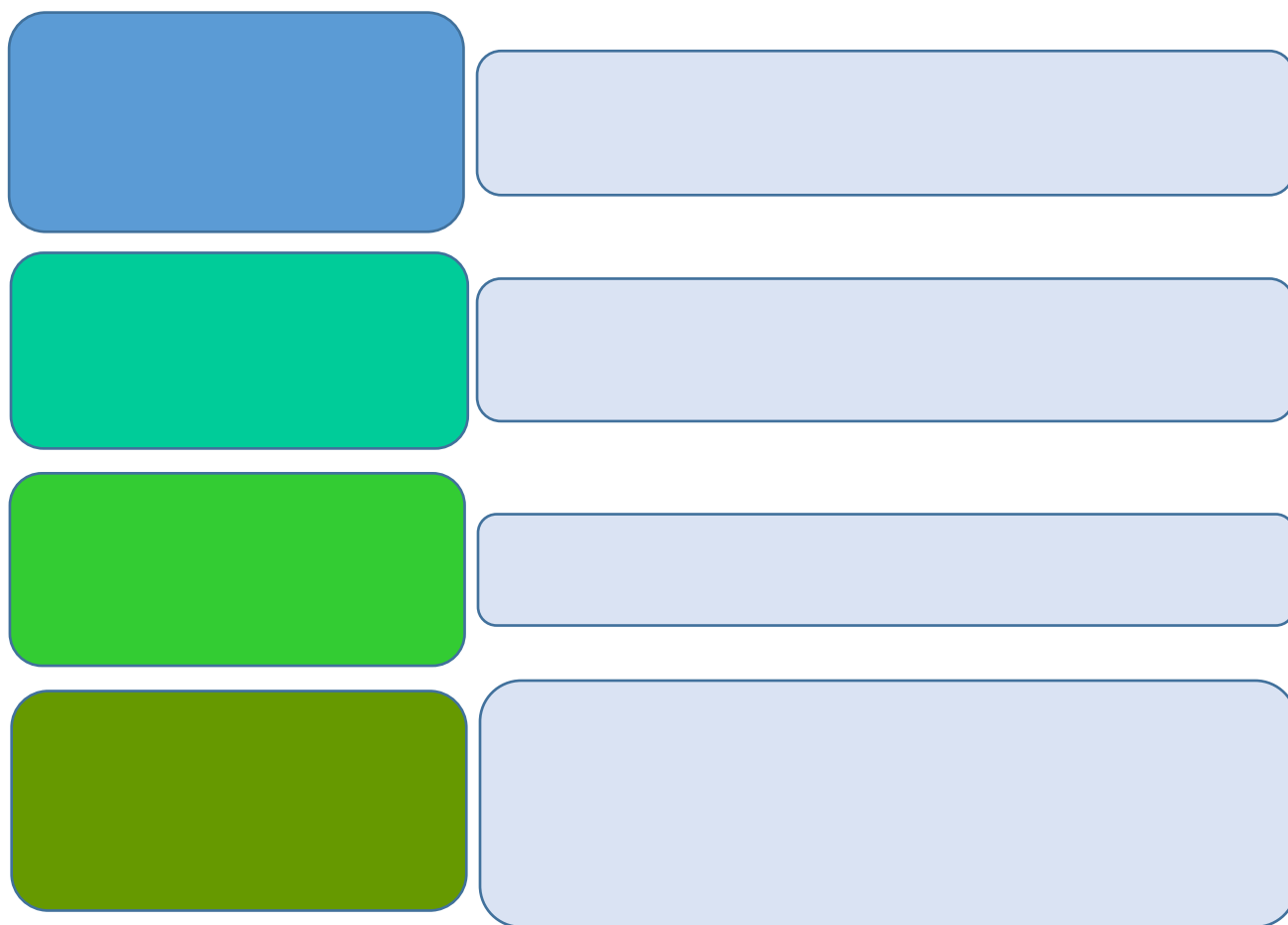
had little capacity, limited authority and no operational military nor internal security forces (ISF). The country was able to hold free elections thanks to significant international assistance, bringing to power President Faustin Archange and a new government in February 2016. Since then, the situation has remained unstable, and the Government has struggled to establish its authority in large

together all international stakeholders around one document.<sup>4</sup> Despite this positive development, the country continues to suffer from the consequences of years of conflict marked by a fragile socioeconomic situation, a substantial part of its population being either displaced (463,000 in June 2019) or refugees in neighboring countries (605,000), and 2.9 million people in need of humanitarian assistance<sup>5</sup>.

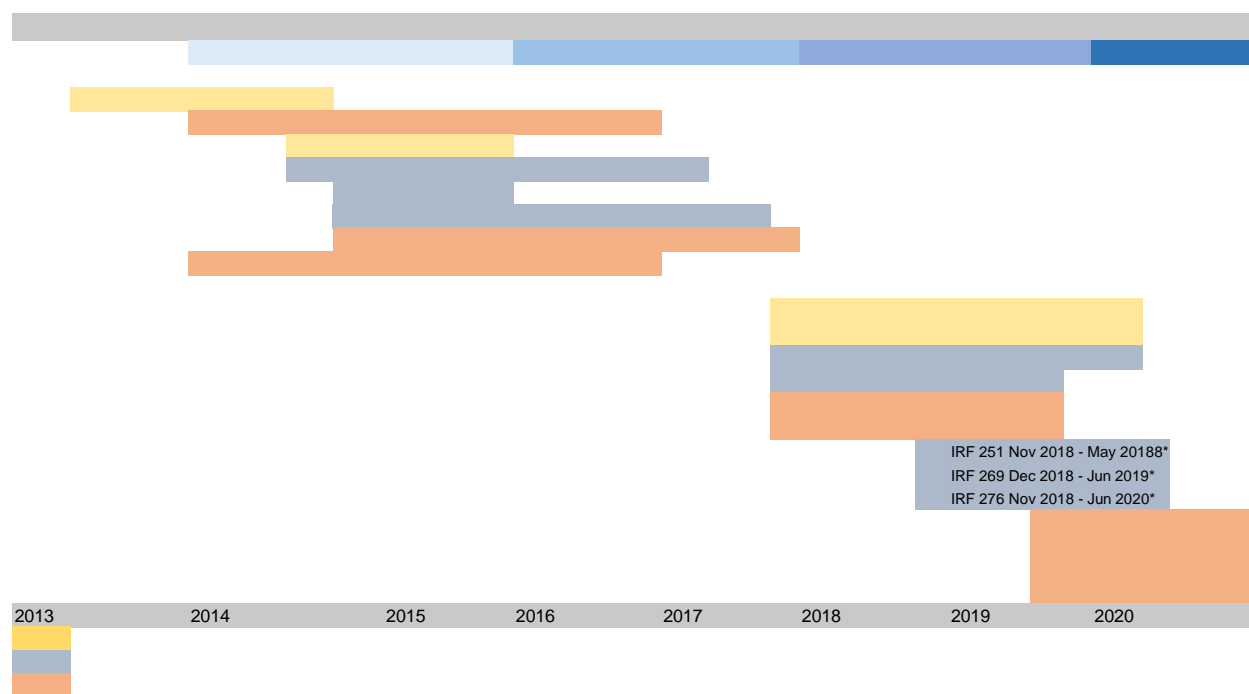
## **PBF engagements in CAR**

The **PBF has been funding peacebuilding activities in CAR since 2007** with a **total budget of USD 100 million**<sup>6</sup>, of which USD 33.7 million was spent prior to the 2013 crisis. During the transition period from 2014 to 2016, the PBF invested USD 21.0 million. Between 2016 and 2019, the PBF allocated USD 22.3 million, with some of the projects still underway. A total of **USD 42.3 million** was invested during the **period under review**.

The projects of the **first phase targeted urgent needs** such as establishing basic security in Bangui and in the accessible areas of the country, while supporting a transition government with little capacity to organize free and transparent elections. The Bangui Forum of May 2015 was a key milestone that brought together all stakeholders and the population around the organization of the elections, which were held in December 2015 and February 2016. The **second phase of projects** from 2017 to 2018/2019 took place in the context of a **newly elected government**, which was expected to establish its authority and redeploy its agents throughout a country largely controlled by armed groups. With support from international donors (World Bank, European Union, United Nations) and pledges of over USD 2 billion in assistance, the new government defined its priorities in the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan for Central African Republic (Plan National de Relèvement et de Consolidation de la Paix pour la République Centrafricaine or RCPCA)



Projects were implemented according to the following calendar:



Due to the **volatile context and the absence of a clear peacebuilding strategic plan** in CAR, **all 14 projects** evaluated were financed through the **Immediate Response Facility (IRF)**. Projects were therefore limited to a duration of 18 months and a USD 3 million ceiling, except for the project on the payment

their ultimate impact impossible. Finally, the **composition and availability of some key informants** may have favored some perspectives versus others, with a larger representation (74%) of United Nations staff, RUNOs, and local partners (government and civil society) than projects beneficiaries (26%) among key informants. Finally, only a small percentage of women were interviewed with 30 out of 128 key informants being female (23%).

## **Evaluation findings**

The following sections present an overview of findings for each of the evaluation criteria with respect to the project management and oversight mechanisms.

### **Relevance of PBF projects in CAR**

In general, the **PBF projects in CAR were relevant to the context, the needs of the moment, and the priorities of the UN and the CAR Government.** However, there were **certain weaknesses in terms of the strategic fit of certain projects, the coherence of project activities**



### **Needs of the population**

The **participation of civil society or beneficiary representatives** in project design was overall very **limited**. Some key informants from civil society indicated that PBF funding often did not address the population's immediate needs. For example, one-month cash-for-work projects for ex-combatants or income generating activities (IGAs) for a very limited number of beneficiaries in the communities targeted by the CVR project in Paoua (IRF 127), were considered insufficient by their beneficiaries to make a difference or have a medium or long-term effect. Some representatives of women's organizations considered the project on women's political participation (IRF 187) to be addressing the needs of only a small minority of women among the urban elites who are interested in political participation but not necessarily the needs of the vast majority of women in the country.

### **Root causes and key drivers of conflict**

The takeover of government in March 2013 by the Séléka coalition compo0.00000916(e)6(l)-2(i)-2(t)7(e)-3(s)4( )JTJ

## Effectiveness and impact

According to the performance framework defined by the PBF secretariat in Bangui, most projects did achieve their main targeted results. The performance framework was aligned with the pillars of the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan for CAR and the UNDAF Plus objectives. Some of the most significant results highlighted by key informants include:

**Support for a national dialogue (IRF 103)** led to the Bangui Forum and the elections at the end of 2015/early 2016. The project organized 101 consultations at the local, prefectural and national levels involving almost 16,000 people and contributed to the participation of 350 delegates from the prefectures at the Bangui Forum. In addition, the project **IRF 187** contributed to a dialogue with armed groups through the mediation of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) Secretariat to record their grievances to inform the discussions that led to the signing of the APPR in February 2019.

Projects to **strengthen internal security forces** provided police officers and gendarmes in Bangui with concrete support, including the rehabilitation of seven police stations and three gendarmerie offices in Bangui (IRF 79), the payment of four months of salaries to 3,564 ISF members (IRF 88) and of retirement benefits for approximately 350 police and gendarmerie officers, in addition to training expenses for 500 new recruits



received professional training, including literacy courses and IGA kits in 17 different types of professional activities.

Several projects faced challenges with respect to the implementation of their activities and did not achieve all the targeted results. These challenges were mainly due to the following factors:

**A lack of coherence within projects combining several activities and objectives, which were implemented by different implementing partners and** whose logic and contribution to peacebuilding were not always clearly defined. For example, several projects implemented IGA or cash-for-work activities (for example IRF 129 and IRF 183) without linking those activities clearly to the main project objective. The lack of coherence prevented the projects from maximizing their impact on peace dynamics and the non-achievement of some objectives raised questions regarding the effectiveness and efficiency of funds used.

**Projects were not always based on a detailed conflict analysis** specific to each area of implementation and the targeted beneficiaries. Many project documents reprised analyses from the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan or provided general contextual analyses specific to the sector, such as the analysis of the

peacebuilding efforts should be measured by a decrease in violence and armed groups activity in the country. The ACLED database of violent incidents shows that there were recurrent cycles of more or less intense armed group activity in CAR until the end of 2018 and a decrease of violence since the signature of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in CAR in February 2019. Several informants suggested that, considering the volatility and complexity of the context and the somewhat modest investments compared to the actual needs, it might be too ambitious to expect a real impact of PBF investments in CAR. Instead, some have suggested to

With respect to **financial catalytic effects**, other donors have acknowledged that PBF investments can indicate that a specific intervention area is receiving greater attention and, as such, are always welcome.

rehabilitation of public buildings. It was difficult to properly assess gender issues since most monitoring reports did not disaggregate the indicators by sex

According to these informants, it would have been preferable if a wider range of agencies had received PBF funds. Other



**Coordination with civil society:** Central African civil society organizations have been grateful for PBF support but have complained about not being sufficiently consulted or engaged in project design. National NGOs were rarely involved in project design in a substantial way. Some PBF and RUNO officials have acknowledged that the short deadlines assigned to project proposal development did not allow for more than one or two meetings with local organizations. Several local organizations involved in project implementation were only contacted by the RUNOs once the projects had been approved, and they mainly played a service provider role for already determined activities instead of being real program





**Revise and improve the performance framework of the PBF portfolio** with additional details and clear results for each pillar.

**Strengthen the monitoring and evaluation capacity** of the PBF secretariat to collect more relevant data and support RUNOs and local partners in developing indicators that are relevant to peacebuilding and gender-sensitive.

Reflect upon whether **short deadlines to submit concept notes** and **project proposals are counterproductive** and prevent the development of high-quality project designs.

Consider the possibility **for the PBF to produce clearer guidelines on conceptualizing**

Reconsider **what available data would allow to measure the impact of projects and of all the interventions** on peacebuilding in CAR as the current data from the Harvard Humanitarian initiative is too aggregated with respect to the PBF projects' needs.

#### *Gender*

**Apply 2019 PBF guidelines on gender** and gender markers.

**Reinforce the gender approach of projects and RUNOs capacity** for gender-focused programmes and indicators.

**Integrate gender-sensitive indicators** in results frameworks.

**Analyze monitoring data**