I – Crisis Preparedness

Context

The COVID-19 pandemic has put a severe strain on particularly fragile African countries such as the CAR, which are facing a multidimensional crisis in difficult economic and political conditions: Prolonged insecurity and conflict, lack of state of authority, extreme poverty, fragile health systems, etc…

The pandemic erupts at a sensitive and critical moment as the country prepares for the 2020/2022 general and local elections and risks losing key development and sustainable peace gains achieved since the conflict in 2013.

To this end, the UNDP office in CAR worked actively within the UN Country Team, under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator and in consultation with the Government, to submit a comprehensive and holistic recovery, resilience and response plan to COVID19 consisting of three main pillars.

Main challenges

- Prolonged insecurity and conflict
- Lack of state authority, extreme poverty, fragile health systems
- Insufficient access to safe drinking water and sanitation
- Very high unemployment mainly rain-fed food-producing agriculture and very limited fiscal space.

I-Crisis preparedness

- Supporting the health response
- Developing national capacity and systems to plan, coordinate ministries and implement the recovery and resilience.

Support/rebuild public and community infrastructure (including health infrastructure) to strengthen their capacity to rebound after the crisis.

II-Inclusive response

- Strengthening the management and response to the crisis
- Ensuring the continuity of essential State services including the preparation of the 2020/2021 general elections leveraging on optimal use of new information technologies
- Strengthening the reestablishment of the authority and presence of the State, supporting community involvement and promoting social cohesion.

III-Recovery and Resilience

Recover from the crisis by critically assessing and using the results of the long-term socio-economic impact analysis (livelihood opportunities, revitalize the economy, ensure sustainable delivery of basic social services and build/strengthen key infrastructure).

Mainstreaming gender dynamics and the differentiated impacts of COVID-19 on men and women.
II- Inclusive Response

- **Continuity of key government services**
- **Improving national ownership in the use of digital**
- **Support for the prison population and staff**
- **Support to internal security forces**
- **Support to the National Elections Authority (A.N.E.)**

And more ...

Local communities are mobilized and engaged in COVID-19 prevention and the protection of vulnerable groups:

- **13,000 communication and awareness-raising materials** (comic strips, posters, leaflets and brochures) are made available to the population;
- **The 100 identified and trained volunteers** will organize 7 days of information and awareness campaigns for the general public in the coming weeks;
- An information and awareness sketch is produced;
- **18 community radio stations** broadcast the awareness sketch;
- **3300 Internal Security Personnel of the 229 Internal Security Forces (ISF) units** are being equipped to prevent the spread of COVID-19, are involved in raising public awareness and ensure continuity of service;
- **Prison staff and the prison population in the 12 functional penitentiary institutions** benefit from the actions to limit the spread of COVID-19

Key Indicator of Success (ZOOM Equipment to Government)
41 key State services and institutions, including the Presidency, the Prime Minister’s Office and 39 sectoral ministries, are able to ensure the continuity of their services through the use of advanced technologies for telework and videoconferencing.

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All this is taking into account gender dynamics and the differentiated impacts of COVID-19 on men and women.
III- Recovery and Resilience

Socio-economic impact study carried out

The study:
- Will inform the formulation of all the Government's sectoral policies
- Helped to develop a comprehensive integrated programme of interventions with the entire United Nations country team based on three types of evolving scenarios
- Focus areas
  - Infrastructure
  - Livelihoods
  - Social safety nets, educational support
  - Support to the productive sector and the creation of value chains, and awareness raising

Findings:
- Drop in the GDP growth rate from 5 to -1.2%
- Employment (loss of 9 out of 10 jobs, mainly in the informal sector), vulnerable groups (young people, women, the elderly, displaced persons and refugees, and persons with disabilities).

Community livelihoods are strengthened

Revitalization of the economic activities (UNDP, PBF and partners):
- 500 young people are supported in their Income Generating Activities;
- 1000 farming households benefit from joint UNDP and FAO support;
- 15 community infrastructures built, including 3 wells for the supply of drinking water (Haut-Mbomou)

And more ...
- Consultations with NGOs partners on the possibility to launch a new intervention covid-19 related in: Lower Kotto -Mobaye, Satéma, Zangba.
- 100 identified and trained volunteers, to run 7 days of information and awareness campaigns for the general public
  - An information and awareness sketch is produced;
  - 18 community radio stations broadcast the awareness sketch;
- Leveraging on work from talent and entrepreneurial youths on masks production
- UNDP Office has placed a large order for these masks for staff and sensitization sessions on COVID-19, which will result in job and income creation, strengthening the production capacity of groups, which will be transformed into small and medium enterprises.

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A- Lessons Learned

➢ Population resilience
   • In a context of high dependency on humanitarian assistance, focus socio-economic interventions is critical to building the resilience and recovery capacities of beneficiary communities;
   • Emphasizing on communication, put the youth in the center of all initiatives (value, motivate to leverage on volunteering willingness to serve the communities, and the country)

➢ Coordination and synergies
   • Good cooperation between partners around a common position during COVID-19 reinforce trust and is a key factor for resources mobilization
   • Strengthening the humanitarian-development partnership is possible even during emergency or crisis when the objectives converge and the comparative advantages of each are recognized
   • Although the crisis, it is always useful to check beforehand whether similar support has already been provided to beneficiaries by other partners in order to avoid duplication of interventions;
   • In spite of very strong operational constraints, marked by the political fragility of context, security issues, difficulties of access and a very narrow local market for goods and services, today aggravate by the context of COVID-19, it is still possible to intervene and provide concrete and tangible responses to the needs of the populations.
   • The strong involvement of the State's technical services in the implementation process of the CO's projects reinforces the ownership of the project by the beneficiary communities.

➢ Communication
   • Using social networks as a source of information on people's interests (the Facebook post on local masks was received 13,000 views) is a good way to communicate and raise awareness of UNDP results.

B- Good Practices

Capitalization on existing assets
   • Scaling up existing youth project to accelerate the Covid response
   • Existing partnership ensure local presence and reaching vulnerable population

Communication
   • Optimized and diversified internal/external communication channels (Social media network, community radio, newsletters, comics book, sign language)
   • Close collaboration with the Central Africa Community Media Network

Reprogramming and resources realignment
   • Scaling up existing Youth project
   • Partnership with NGOs enable ground intervention and reaching vulnerable

Partnership
   • Coordination between international partners (EU, US) enabled complementarity and avoided duplication;
   • Partnership between UN agencies and with NGO ACTED allowed resource mobilization and helped to overcome the operational challenges

C- Challenges

• Slow awareness of the pandemic due to misinformation
• Slow operational procedure (Health Procurement)
• National partners' slow response and lack of capacity
• Difficulty in obtaining specific data, (e.g. radio data)
• Low level of resource mobilization
• Communication impacted by the religious context

D- Opportunities

• Development of the local and national private sector
  • Local circuit of artisanal and agricultural production
  • Developing long term agreements with local specialized service providers
• Diversifying partnership, mainly social actors
  • Strengthening the partnership and collaboration with the Central African Community Media Network