

INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE
WEEKLY MEETING

Summary Note

31 October 2007
Geneva

I Debriefing on the Round Table Discussions on CAR and Niger in Brussels

Ms. Kollies (Humanitarian Affairs Officer, Geographical Coordination and Monitoring Section, OCHA) debriefed participants on the Development Partner Round Tables for the Central African Republic (CAR) and Niger, which took place in Brussels on 25 and 26 October 2007 and in which she participated as the OCHA representative.

The two-day Niger round table discussions were organised with the aim of seeking funding for Niger's Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). The PRSP, which covers the period 2008-2012, is based on evolving international and regional conditions, as well as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

With the objective of reaching the MDGs, obtaining better regional integration, a competitive economy, access to basic social services for the poor and consolidating peace, Niger's PRSP focuses on intensification of the rural production, food security measures, improving competitiveness of local products, infrastructure investments and human resource development (women, education, health). Reaching the MDGs in 2015 is, however, likely to face several challenges in terms of the insecure situation in the North, the weak national capacity to absorb and invest funds, natural disasters such as locusts, floods and droughts, and demographical challenges, such as the very high birth rates (up to twelve births per woman).

On the development of the PRSP in Niger, Ms. Kollies noted that it has been drafted in a participatory manner, just as NGOs and civil society have played a major role. This broad participation was also reflected at the meeting, where the around 60 participants included both international and local NGOs.

The Round Table Discussions on CAR, which took place on 26 October 2007, was - unlike the roundtable discussions on Niger - characterised by low donor presence (14) and absence of civil society members. The objectives set out in the PRSP for CAR include the restoration of security, prevention of conflict and consolidation of peace, promotion of good governance and rule of law, diversification of the economy, and development of human capital by promoting education, employment, access to health and the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Lack of transparency, absorption capacity for the funding requested, adherence to human rights, and non-inclusive political dialogue are key concerns among donors, who remain careful with their pledges with the exception of the EC, who has increased its funding to CAR by 35% from 2008 to 2013. Other challenges include the security situation in the North, demographic challenges, and lack of formal employment.

From a humanitarian perspective, being present at the development round tables was of particular importance, as humanitarian actors need to be included in these discussions in order to improve the transition from emergency response to development.

This issue was also raised by several participants, who commented on the often existing gap between humanitarian response and longer-term development and hence the need to improve the transition between the two. Such discussions are currently ongoing within the IASC and also led to the establishment of the Early Recovery Cluster in 2005 (http://www.undp.org/cpr/iasc/pages/background_material.shtml). It was, moreover, emphasised that humanitarians need to become more involved in the discussions on development strategies, especially in disaster-prone countries, and to establish a connection between instruments such as CAP, UNDAF and PRSPs in order to ensure sustainability of different measures taken.

Equally, it was stressed that the complexity of the situation needs to be taken into consideration when discussing these inter-linkages. In countries such as CAR and Niger one faces a mix of humanitarian crises in certain areas of the country (caused by natural disasters and/or conflict) and general lack of development in other areas, which have to be taken into account when planning the responses.

On a different note, UNICEF commented that a humanitarian reform workshop has been convened in Niger, where the cluster approach has not yet been officially adopted. The workshop showed that further information on humanitarian reform is welcomed, meanwhile it was concluded that more time and analysis is needed to implement the cluster approach. In CAR an exercise that aimed at assessing gaps and challenges related to the cluster approach implementation has been carried out by UNICEF, and results indicated that even though the number of humanitarian workers has increased and programmes have been quite successful, the general coverage of the humanitarian and development aid remains insufficient due to security concerns. UNICEF, moreover, noted that two key scenarios were identified at the recent contingency planning workshop in CAR: One suggesting a mass influx of refugees from Sudan, DRC, Uganda and Chad, and the other suggesting a massive intensification of IDPs, a decrease in access to health services and an increase in hygiene related and epidemic diseases. Finally, UNICEF referred to the Humanitarian and Development Partnership Team's website in CAR as a particular good example of how to facilitate information sharing and communication among partners in the field: <http://hdptcar.net/blog/>

Participants

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