

## CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC (CAR)

The overall security situation remains fragile following a military coup in 2013. Intercommunal conflicts continue in several parts of the country. As a result of the collapse of national rule and the disintegration of security institutions, rape and other forms of sexual violence became widespread.

### 1. What are the issues surrounding the stigma faced by survivors of sexual violence, their families, communities etc.

- The absence of a functioning justice and health system, combined with fear of retaliation, and pressure placed on survivors and their families by the perpetrators, continues to deter reporting.
- Survivors experience rejection by their families and communities, particularly when pregnant. Children born of rape are rarely accepted by society and a high number of rape victims resort to unsafe abortion, which is the leading cause of maternal mortality.
- Many public structures charge fees to medical services and certificates which renders them inaccessible to those who are indigent.

### 2. Who is doing something already in these countries incl. FCO, DFID, Champion countries, local initiatives (NGO, government, leaders)

- The Team of Experts is providing technical assistance to the Government towards the establishment of a Special Court to ensure conflict-related sexual violence is central to these efforts; support the national authorities in CAR in cooperation with UNDP and UN Women in the framework of the joint justice programme, including on strengthening the legal framework; support the Government in operationalising the Joint rapid response unit in the police and gendarmerie on addressing conflict-related sexual violence.<sup>1</sup>
- **War Child** (NGO) is working to protect children who have been separated from their families.
- In 2015, the **Team of Experts** deployed to CAR, where it provided advice to the Government on the establishment of a joint rapid response unit within the gendarmerie and the police, to ensure that crimes of sexual violence received adequate attention.
- Several NGOs, including those supported by DFID offer clinical care for survivors, but the capacity to provide psycho-social support across the country is low.

### 3. Specific activities that need doing e.g. access to legal or medical care, judicial reform, evidence gathering etc.

- Restoration of public health services disrupted by the conflict, particularly in rural areas. People have limited access to medical/specialised care.
- Increase awareness of services available to victims of sexual violence

<sup>1</sup> Team of Experts: Rule of Law/Sexual Violence in Conflict: Table of Activities 2016-17

- Operationalise the joint rapid response unit to combat sexual violence and establish to Special Criminal Court to exercise jurisdiction over grave violations of international law.<sup>2</sup> There is proposed Team of Experts work concerning this.
- A key need is for female police officers who are specialised in dealing with cases of rape and sexual violence so that they can be more empathetic in dealing with traumatised women to avoid further victimisation.
- Proposed Team of Experts work includes supporting the national authorities in cooperation with UNDP and UN Women in the framework of the joint justice programme, including on strengthening the legal framework.
- Continued lack of capacity within security institutions to respond to threats and incidents remains a major obstacle in the collective efforts to stop the violence and restore the rule of law in CAR.

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<sup>2</sup> SRSR Report: Conflict Related Sexual Violence 2016