CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

# Bangui Declaration on Joint Actions

## Philanthropy

*Delivering for the people, Prefecture by Prefecture*

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CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC · BANGUI DECLARATION ON JOINT ACTIONS

SECTION 1 OF 7

# Overview

*Rural CAR philanthropic issues*

CAR presents one of the most complex development environments in Africa. While often viewed through the lens of fragility and humanitarian need, the country also possesses significant long-term development potential. Rich natural resources, extensive agricultural land, abundant rainfall, and a predominantly young population provide a foundation for future growth. Yet these assets remain underutilised due to a combination of geographic isolation, insecurity, weak infrastructure, and limited institutional reach.

Development challenges in CAR are rarely confined to a single sector. Instead, they emerge from the interaction of multiple constraints that reinforce one another. Across large parts of the country – particularly in rural prefectures – communities face not only poverty, but also physical remoteness, limited access to public services, and recurring economic and security shocks.

Perhaps the most important characteristic shaping development outcomes in CAR is isolation. Large distances, poor road networks, seasonal inaccessibility, weak communications infrastructure, and limited market connectivity create barriers that affect nearly every aspect of economic and social life. What may appear to be separate challenges in healthcare, education, agriculture, enterprise development, or employment often stem from the same underlying issue: communities are disconnected from the services, markets, and institutions they depend upon.

The consequences are far-reaching. Roads that are impassable during the rainy season restrict access to healthcare, limit the movement of teachers and public servants, increase transport costs for farmers, reduce commercial activity, and weaken supply chains. As a result, infrastructure is not simply a development sector in its own right – it is the foundation upon which broader economic and social progress depends.

Access to essential services remains one of the country's most significant development concerns. In many rural areas, healthcare facilities are distant, under-resourced, or difficult to reach. Preventable diseases such as malaria, respiratory infections, diarrhoeal illnesses, and maternal health complications continue to have severe impacts, not only because of their prevalence but because timely diagnosis and treatment are often unavailable.

Water access presents a similar challenge. CAR is not a water-scarce country; rather, the difficulty lies in maintaining reliable and safe water systems. Community water infrastructure frequently suffers from inadequate maintenance, limited technical support, and weak supply chains for repairs. Consequently, investments in infrastructure often fail to deliver their full long-term impact unless accompanied by local management capacity and sustainable maintenance systems.

Education outcomes are also shaped by access constraints. In many communities, the primary challenge is not educational quality but the availability of functioning schools, trained teachers, and safe access for children. Distance, insecurity, and household economic pressures all contribute to irregular attendance and high dropout rates, particularly among girls.

These human development challenges are deeply interconnected. Poor water access affects health outcomes. Health conditions influence school attendance. Weak infrastructure limits service delivery. Improving one area frequently generates benefits across several others.

Agriculture remains the backbone of the rural economy and the primary livelihood source for much of the population. Importantly, CAR's food security challenges do not stem from a lack of agricultural potential. The country benefits from fertile soils, substantial rainfall, and relatively low population density across many regions.

The principal constraints lie elsewhere. Insecurity, displacement, weak transport infrastructure, inadequate storage, and limited market access repeatedly disrupt agricultural production and reduce returns for rural households. Farmers may successfully cultivate crops yet remain unable to capture value because produce cannot reach markets efficiently, storage facilities are inadequate, or traders are unwilling to travel to remote locations.

This dynamic highlights a critical opportunity for development-oriented investment. Improvements in logistics, storage, processing, rural transport networks, and value-chain integration have the potential to generate benefits far beyond agriculture alone. By strengthening the systems that connect producers to consumers, such investments can improve food security, increase incomes, and stimulate broader economic activity.

Despite difficult operating conditions, local enterprise activity is widespread. Small-scale processing, agricultural trading, transport services, repair businesses, livestock commerce, and retail trade form the backbone of many local economies. The challenge is not an absence of entrepreneurship; rather, it is the inability of many enterprises to scale beyond highly fragmented local markets.

Poor connectivity, limited access to finance, insecurity, and weak commercial infrastructure constrain business growth. Many enterprises remain trapped in low-volume, low-margin activities because they lack reliable access to larger markets, financial services, storage facilities, and supply networks. Even capable entrepreneurs often struggle to expand due to structural limitations within the wider economic environment.

For impact investors, this suggests that the greatest opportunities may lie not only in supporting individual businesses, but in strengthening the broader ecosystems that enable enterprise growth. Investments in market infrastructure, aggregation systems, value chains, financial inclusion, logistics, and local processing can create conditions under which private sector activity becomes more sustainable and scalable.

CAR's young population represents both a major opportunity and a significant development challenge. Many young people face limited livelihood pathways, often choosing between subsistence agriculture, informal trade, migration, or prolonged economic inactivity. Educational disruption, weak labour markets, and limited private sector opportunities make the transition into productive employment difficult.

The challenge extends beyond job creation alone. Sustainable youth inclusion requires stronger local economies capable of generating opportunities across agriculture, processing, transport, services, and small enterprise development. Skills training and entrepreneurship programmes can contribute to this process, but they are most effective when linked to real economic opportunities and functioning markets.

Another defining feature of the development landscape is the uneven presence of public institutions across rural areas. In many locations, government services are limited, and humanitarian or non-governmental organisations play a significant role in delivering essential support. While these interventions remain critical, long-term development depends on strengthening local systems capable of sustaining progress beyond individual projects.

Schools require teachers and oversight. Health facilities need staff, medicines, and supply chains. Water systems depend on local maintenance arrangements. Markets require regulation, security, and infrastructure. Without these supporting systems, infrastructure investments alone often struggle to deliver lasting results.

The Central African Republic's development trajectory will be determined less by individual sectoral interventions than by the ability to address the structural factors that connect them. Isolation, insecurity, weak

infrastructure, and fragmented markets remain the principal barriers to progress. At the same time, these constraints reveal where the greatest opportunities for impact may lie.

Investments that improve connectivity, strengthen market systems, expand access to basic services, and support local enterprise can generate benefits across multiple sectors simultaneously. Therefore, CAR should therefore be viewed not solely as a humanitarian context, but as a system-wide development opportunity where integrated investments have the potential to unlock significant social and economic returns. The country's future prospects depend on reconnecting communities to markets, services, and institutions, creating the foundations for inclusive growth and long-term resilience.

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC · BANGUI DECLARATION ON JOINT ACTIONS

SECTION 2 OF 7

# Education and Skills Development

*With a focus on rehabilitation and gender*

## Background Information

Education and skills development in rural developing contexts are shaped by a web of mutually reinforcing pressures: poverty, distance, insecurity, gender inequality, weak public administration, limited labour markets, and recurring humanitarian crises. In many countries, progress in expanding primary school enrolment has not translated into equivalent improvements in learning, retention, or transition into decent livelihoods. The central problem is therefore no longer only whether children enter school, but whether they remain there, learn effectively, and acquire the academic, practical, and social capabilities needed to participate in community and economic life.

This broader pattern is especially visible in conflict-affected rural contexts such as CAR where education, vocational training, youth employment, social reintegration, and peacebuilding cannot be treated as separate policy areas. The collapse or weakening of schools creates conditions in which children and young people are more vulnerable to child labour, early marriage, displacement, recruitment by armed groups, and long-term exclusion from formal employment. In turn, the absence of credible livelihood pathways undermines social cohesion and makes recovery more fragile. For this reason, initiatives in CAR increasingly sit within a Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus approach, linking emergency education, institutional rebuilding, vocational training, reintegration of former combatants, gender inclusion, and local stabilisation.

Across rural developing contexts, educational exclusion begins with basic access but rarely ends there. Children may live several kilometres from the nearest school, cross insecure or seasonally impassable roads, study in overcrowded classrooms, or attend schools without trained teachers, textbooks, sanitation, or inspection systems. Even where enrolment has risen, poor learning outcomes remain common: children can spend several years in school without becoming fluent readers or developing basic numeracy. These deficits then narrow later opportunities for vocational training, entrepreneurship, public service, or skilled work.

Poverty deepens these barriers. In subsistence and low-income rural economies, children often contribute directly to household survival through agricultural labour, herding, domestic work, informal trade, or care responsibilities. Families facing immediate economic pressure may view schooling as costly, particularly where uniforms, materials, transport, or informal fees are required. The transition from primary to secondary education is a particularly fragile point because secondary schools are fewer, farther away, and more expensive to access. Girls often face additional restrictions linked to safety concerns, early marriage, pregnancy, domestic responsibilities, inadequate sanitation, and the absence of female teachers who can act as mentors and role models. Boys, while less frequently the focus of gender-based education programming, may also leave school for paid work, mining, agriculture, or recruitment into armed groups.

In conflict-affected settings, these challenges are intensified. Schools may be destroyed, occupied, abandoned, or used as displacement shelters. The result is not simply an education crisis, but a wider social and economic crisis. Young people who miss schooling require accelerated learning, psychosocial support, and practical skills pathways. Former combatants need opportunities for disarmament, demobilisation, reintegration, and acceptance by communities. Displaced families require flexible education provision and support to restore

livelihoods. In this sense, education and skills development become central to peacebuilding because they help reduce vulnerability, rebuild trust, and create alternatives to violence.

CAR illustrates these dynamics acutely. The country remains marked by protracted institutional fragility, recurrent conflict, population displacement, and weak public service delivery. In education, the consequences have been severe. Large numbers of children have experienced interrupted schooling, and significant proportions remain without reliable access to education. For those who do attend, learning conditions are often poor: classrooms are overcrowded, infrastructure is damaged or vulnerable to weather, and teacher shortages are acute. A reported primary grade one pupil-teacher ratio of around 120:1 captures the scale of pressure on the system, while the average of one classroom per 148 primary students indicates the physical constraints under which learning takes place.

Conflict and displacement are among the primary drivers of educational dysfunction. Families fleeing insecurity may move into areas where schools are already overstretched or where no formal provision exists. Schools themselves may be damaged, deserted, or unable to operate consistently. In such conditions, children's learning trajectories become fragmented. Some never enrol; others drop out; many attend irregularly; and those who return after long absences may be too old for their grade level or lack the foundational literacy and numeracy needed to progress.

Gender inequality compounds the crisis. Women and girls face disproportionate obstacles to educational attainment, including poverty, early pregnancy, early marriage, insecurity, and domestic labour. Literacy gaps reflect these structural barriers: women are substantially more likely to be illiterate than men, and girls' dropout rates rise sharply in rural areas. The low proportion of women among primary and secondary teachers further limits the availability of female role models and gender-sensitive support within schools. Improving girls' education in CAR is therefore not only a matter of access, but also of safety, representation, and community norms.

At the same time, CAR's education landscape is inseparable from youth employment and social reintegration. A generation of young people has grown up amid disrupted schooling, weak labour markets, and exposure to armed violence. Without credible routes into learning, work, or entrepreneurship, young people remain vulnerable to recruitment, exploitation, and cycles of insecurity. Education policy must therefore connect formal schooling with accelerated learning, vocational training, civic education, psychosocial support, and community-based livelihood creation.

CAR government frameworks have increasingly treated education and skills development as instruments of recovery and stabilisation. The National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan 2017–2021 marked a shift from emergency response toward longer-term rebuilding, linking state authority, basic services, social cohesion, economic recovery, and peace. Within this approach, education is not simply a social sector; it is a foundation for legitimacy, inclusion, and violence prevention. Where schools function, teachers are present, and young people can see a pathway from learning to livelihoods, communities are more likely to experience recovery as tangible and inclusive.

A central component of the national response is the Disarmament, Demobilisation, Reintegration, and Repatriation programme. DDRR is designed to help former members of armed groups move into civilian life or, where appropriate, into national security structures. Its process includes weapons handover, identification, medical checks, psychosocial support, and material or financial assistance. Yet the decisive stage is reintegration: former combatants need practical skills, community acceptance, and sustainable livelihoods if demobilisation is to reduce rather than merely pause the risk of renewed violence.

Training and reintegration support therefore includes civic education and vocational preparation in fields such as agriculture, carpentry, masonry, tailoring, commerce, mechanics, and basic information technology. Start-up kits and cooperative support are intended to turn training into income-generating activity, while psychosocial support and community engagement address the social dimensions of reintegration. These

measures matter because reintegration is not only an individual transition; it is a negotiated process between ex-combatants, households, victims, local leaders, and host communities.

For people who do not qualify for formal DDRR, Community Violence Reduction programmes provide a complementary route. These initiatives typically offer shorter cycles of vocational training, civic education, group livelihood support, and public works activities. Their value lies in bridging the gap between security and development: they reduce idle time among at-risk youth, provide immediate income through community infrastructure projects, and create shared benefits for communities that may otherwise resent assistance targeted only at former fighters.

The Central African Agency for Vocational Training and Employment also occupies an important place in the national skills architecture. Through its role in training delivery, certification, labour-market planning, vocational centre management, and financing linked to payroll contributions, it represents an attempt to institutionalise skills development beyond project-based interventions. Alongside this, the National Employment and Vocational Training Policy Framework prioritises vulnerable groups, including youth, former combatants, displaced people, refugees, people with disabilities, and migrant families. This signals recognition that employability policy in CAR must be inclusive if it is to support national recovery.

International support to CAR reinforces the same logic by combining humanitarian recovery, education reform, infrastructure, gender inclusion, reintegration, and peacebuilding. The World Bank has supported CAR through interventions focused on ex-combatant reintegration, community infrastructure, education system strengthening, and women and girls' empowerment. Projects such as the Reintegration of Ex-combatants Project, the Maïngo Project, and the Education Sector Plan Support Project address different parts of the same problem: the need to rebuild institutions while giving communities and young people visible alternatives to violence and exclusion.

The Global Partnership for Education, working with the World Bank and national authorities, has supported priorities such as expanding access, improving teaching quality, strengthening education management, and building resilience for conflict-affected children and youth. Activities including classroom construction, teacher training, curriculum reform, Sango-language instruction, remedial education, accelerated learning, and data systems respond directly to the weaknesses seen in CAR's education sector. They also recognise that access and quality must advance together: building classrooms is insufficient if teachers are unavailable or untrained, while training teachers is insufficient if children cannot safely reach school.

MINUSCA's Community Violence Reduction work adds a stabilisation dimension to this agenda. By targeting non-eligible combatants, at-risk youth, women, and other vulnerable groups, CVR programmes recognise that the boundary between combatant and civilian vulnerability is often blurred in prolonged conflict. Short-term vocational training, civic education, group start-up support, and cash-for-work infrastructure projects aim to reduce immediate risks while restoring public goods such as roads, markets, schools, boreholes, health centres, and solar lighting. These investments matter because they provide both material benefits and visible signs that peace can produce local dividends.

Across these schemes, women, girls, young mothers, displaced youth, and at-risk young people emerge as priority groups. Scholarships, safe spaces, school nurseries, female participation quotas, and support to keep girls in school are not peripheral measures; they address the social conditions that determine whether education is actually accessible. For girls and young women, the barriers are often cumulative: distance, insecurity, household labour, pregnancy, child marriage, cost, menstruation-related exclusion, and a shortage of female teachers all interact. A gender-sensitive education strategy must therefore combine school access with protection, health, mentoring, and economic support.

Local organisations and community-led initiatives also play an important role, especially in insecure or underserved areas where central state capacity is limited. Organisations such as ADEC and ASV, alongside initiatives such as Kundukua, demonstrate the importance of locally grounded education planning.

Community-led approaches can help identify which children are out of school, which routes are unsafe, which girls are at risk of dropping out, and which skills are most relevant to local livelihoods. They also support trust-building between communities, schools, local authorities, and external partners.

The Central African Republic's education and skills development situation is therefore best understood as part of a wider struggle over recovery, inclusion, and peace. Rural poverty, weak infrastructure, gender inequality, displacement, teacher shortages, and insecurity all restrict learning. These barriers then feed into youth unemployment, social exclusion, and vulnerability to armed mobilisation. The schemes developed by the CAR government, international partners, MINUSCA, the World Bank, the Global Partnership for Education, vocational training institutions, and local organisations attempt to interrupt this cycle by linking education with livelihoods, reintegration, social cohesion, and institutional rebuilding.

These efforts are most persuasive when they treat schools, training centres, communities, and labour markets as connected parts of one recovery system. Classroom construction, teacher training, accelerated learning, Sango-language instruction, girls' scholarships, vocational training, start-up kits, cooperative support, public works, and psychosocial services each address different symptoms of the same structural crisis. Their long-term success will depend on coordination, sustained financing, community ownership, gender-sensitive implementation, and the ability to translate learning into real livelihood opportunities.

### Multilateral Initiatives

International interventions are increasingly aligned with the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (HDPN) framework, ensuring that technical assistance supports both immediate community resilience and long-term institutional stability.

## World Bank Interventions

The World Bank has approved a $30 million grant specifically targeting the "Reintegration of Ex-combatants Project." This initiative supports 5,000 ex-combatants and their host communities over 30 months through vocational training and advisory services. Crucially, the project includes a gender-focused action plan, ensuring that vocational training is specifically tailored to the interests and needs of women, thereby addressing the historical marginalisation of female former associates of armed groups.

The World Bank is a primary donor and strategic partner in the Central African Republic, focusing its interventions on building human capital through two main pillars: the rehabilitation and reintegration of ex-combatants and the educational empowerment of women and girls.

#### *Reintegration of Ex-combatants Project (PREC - P160272)*

Approved in April 2017 with a US$30 million IDA grant, this project is the primary vehicle for supporting combatants transitioning to civilian life.

- Restructuring for Agility: Initially, the project's reintegration support was legally tied to the completion of government-led disarmament, which was stalled by political negotiations. In 2018, the Bank restructured the project to decouple community infrastructure support (Component 2) from the volatile DDRR process, allowing the rehabilitation of schools and health centres to proceed independently.
- Vocational Training and Kits: The project provides a five-month training cycle (one month of civic education and four months of vocational training) in high-demand trades like husbandry, carpentry, masonry, and commerce. Upon completion, ex-combatants receive start-up kits and livelihood guidance to launch small businesses.

- Targeted Impact: The project originally aimed to reintegrate 5,000 ex-combatants, a target revised to 4,000 following the 2020 restructuring. As of late 2020, 710 fighters in Western CAR had completed their training.
- Community Integration: To foster social cohesion, the PREC also funds small-scale infrastructure—such as 60 sub-projects including boreholes, markets, and solar street lights—benefiting approximately 30,000 residents in host communities.

### *Maïngo Project (Human Capital and Women and Girls' Empowerment - P171158)*

Meaning "development" in Sango, the Maïngo project specifically addresses the financial and social bottlenecks that force girls to drop out of school.

- Scholarship Grants: The project provides individual grants of 75,000 CFA francs to secondary school girls to cover registration fees, uniforms, and supplies. Nationally, it has distributed nearly 786 million CFA francs to over 10,400 girls across five prefectures.
- Support for Young Mothers: To keep young mothers in the classroom, the project establishes school-based nurseries so they can attend classes while their infants are cared for.
- Safe Spaces: It has created 150 community safe spaces and 11 school-based safe spaces to provide protection and support for victims of violence.
- Community Advocacy: The Bank works through Associations of Educating Mothers (AME), who conduct door-to-door awareness campaigns to convince parents of the long-term value of female education.

### *Education Sector Plan Support Project (ESPSP - P173103)*

While financed by the Global Partnership for Education, this US$30.85 million project is supervised and implemented by the World Bank.

- Infrastructure and Access: The project constructed 80 pre-primary classrooms in disadvantaged rural areas and 414 primary classrooms, significantly exceeding initial targets.
- Remedial and Alternative Learning: It provided remedial education to over 129,000 struggling students (including 56,000 girls) and established an Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) that graduated 20,698 out-of-school and displaced youth.
- Curriculum Reform: The ESPSP financed the development of a standardized curriculum for early primary grades and supported a pilot initiative to use Sango as the primary language of instruction in 550 schools.

### *Future and Complementary Initiatives*

- CARE Project (P502128): The World Bank has agreed to scale up the successes of the ESPSP through the Accelerating Results in Education (CARE) project, which will continue reforms in teacher training and the national roll-out of Sango instruction.
- Health Synergies: The Bank complements its education work with the SENI and SENI-Plus projects, which received US$53 million to stabilize the healthcare system and address CAR's high maternal mortality rates, which directly impact older girls' ability to stay in school.

## Global Partnership for Education

Global Partnership for Education (GPE) Multilateral support through the GPE includes the Education Sector Plan Support Project (ESPSP). This project prioritises institutional capacity for implementation, ensuring the education system can sustain itself as the country transitions from humanitarian aid to development-oriented programming.

The GPE's approach in CAR is primarily delivered through the ESPSP, a US$30.85 million initiative supervised by the World Bank as the grant agent. The GPE has provided a total of approximately $103 million to CAR as of 2023 to address the education crisis and close the gender gap.

Their approach is structured around three strategic pillars: improving access, enhancing quality, and building system resilience.

### *1. Improving Access and Infrastructure*

GPE focuses on expanding physical access to schooling, particularly in disadvantaged rural prefectures where pre-primary enrollment is as low as 4%.

- Classroom Construction: The project successfully constructed 80 pre-primary classrooms and 414 primary classrooms, while rehabilitating hundreds more to reduce severe overcrowding.
- Decentralised Governance: A key part of their strategy involves empowering local communities. GPE financed the creation and training of 483 School Management Committees (SMCs) and 268 Mothers' Associations (MAs) to manage local grants and oversee school functionality.

### *2. Enhancing Educational Quality*

GPE targets the "broken system" of untrained volunteer teachers and outdated curricula through systemic reforms.

- Linguistic Reform: To reduce high repetition rates, GPE supported a major shift toward using Sango as the primary language of instruction in the early primary years, piloting the program in 550 schools for roughly 120,000 children.
- Teacher Training: The approach includes constructing and expanding Teacher Training Centres and colleges. It has successfully trained all national teacher trainers and nearly 1,800 school principals on new harmonized curricula.
- Materials: GPE funded the development and distribution of standardized textbooks, teacher guides, and scripted lessons for French and mathematics in the first three grades of primary school.

### *3. Building Resilience for Conflict-Affected Youth*

Recognizing that 60% of youth are out of school, GPE implements "curative" strategies for those who cannot re-enter the formal system.

- Accelerated Learning Program (ALP): This program provides a fast-track, condensed curriculum for out-of-school and displaced children, benefiting 20,698 youth (including over 9,500 girls).
- Remedial Education: To prevent further dropouts, GPE delivered targeted academic remediation to 129,030 struggling students, with a specific focus on supporting over 56,000 girls.
- System Management: GPE supports the development of an Education Management Information System (EMIS) and a digital Human Resources platform to track teacher certification and duty station presence.

### *4. Sustainability and Future Integration*

Most GPE activities are aligned with the national Education Sector Plan (2020–2029). To ensure these gains are not lost as the ESPSP closes, the GPE and World Bank are transitioning these efforts into the Accelerating Results in Education (CARE) project, which will scale up teacher training and the national rollout of Sango instruction.

## MINUSCA/ CVR

MINUSCA and Community Violence Reduction (CVR) While formal DDRR is reserved for eligible combatants, the Community Violence Reduction (CVR) programme targets those ineligible for the military and the broader community. This prevents resentment from host communities and enhances resilience through:

- Infrastructure Rehabilitation: Direct repairs to schools and health centres.
- Water Access: Drilling of boreholes to provide safe drinking water to conflict-affected areas.
- Economic Reinsertion: "Cash-for-work" projects that provide immediate income and foster the social acceptance of returning ex-combatants and displaced girls.

The Community Violence Reduction (CVR) programme is a critical mechanism for local stabilisation in the Central African Republic, implemented by MINUSCA (the UN mission) in coordination with the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS). While formal DDRR processes target eligible fighters from signatory groups, CVR is designed as a more flexible, community-wide approach to ending conflict and preventing remobilisation.

The primary aim of CVR is to foster social cohesion and reduce the tendency for violence by providing productive alternatives to conflict. Strategically, the programme is used to:

- Stabilize regions with a high concentration of armed groups.
- Prepare host communities to receive returning ex-combatants by rehabilitating local infrastructure, thereby reducing the stigma and resentment often felt by civilians toward returning fighters.
- Reduce arms circulation through voluntary weapons collection incentives.

### *Target Groups and Eligibility*

CVR acts as a "safety net" for those not meeting the strict criteria for the formal national DDRR programme. This includes:

- Non-eligible combatants: Fighters who lack functional weapons or are from non-signatory groups.
- At-risk youth: Vulnerable young people in conflict zones who are primary targets for recruitment by armed groups.
- Women: The programme maintains a mandatory 30% female participation quota to ensure gender-inclusive recovery.

### *The "Three-Month" Support Package*

Unlike the longer five-month cycles of the formal DDRR reinsertion phase, the CVR provides an intensive three-month package consisting of:

- Vocational Training: Short-term courses in high-demand trades such as agropastoral farming, masonry, carpentry, tailoring, and basic IT.
- Civic and Citizenship Education: Explicit instruction in civic values and conflict resolution designed to facilitate behavioural change and community reconciliation.
- Associative Start-up Support: Rather than supporting individuals alone, CVR often provides financial and material kits to group-based cooperatives. This encourages collective economic interest and helps prevent individual business failures.

### *Community Infrastructure and "Cash-for-Work"*

A major component of the CVR approach involves public works projects that benefit the entire community. Participants are often employed in "cash-for-work" schemes to:

- Drill boreholes and improve access to clean water.

- Rehabilitate schools and health centres.
- Repair roads and install solar street lights to improve local security. In the town of Sam-Ouandja, for example, CVR infrastructure projects led to a local "renaissance," reducing arms circulation and allowing for the resumption of farming and trade.

### *Quantifiable Impact*

Since its inception in 2016, the CVR programme has achieved significant reach:

- Participation: Supported 22,337 individuals, including 6,503 women.
- Weapons Collection: Successfully collected 14,145 weapons, including 579 weapons of war.
- Social Inclusion: In Bimbo, for instance, CVR-trained tailors have successfully transitioned to employing their own apprentices, creating a sustainable chain of local employment.

### *Restructuring for Agility*

In 2018, the World Bank restructured its reintegration funding (the PREC project) to align specifically with the CVR strategy. This allowed community infrastructure support to proceed independently of the political DDRR negotiations, ensuring that community-level stabilisation could continue even when formal peace talks stalled.

## International Initiatives Worth Considering

## Afghanistan: Community-Based Education

Prior to the political changes of the 2020s, rural Afghanistan hosted one of the largest donor-supported girls' education efforts globally. Community-Based Education initiatives were supported by the World Bank and UNICEF alongside bilateral donors.

Instead of requiring children to travel long distances, schools were established within villages, with community members often providing facilities. Female teachers were recruited locally.

### *Gender Impact*

The programme substantially increased girls' enrolment in remote rural areas where parents were reluctant to permit travel to distant schools.

## Colombia: Ex-Combatant Reintegration Through Rural Cooperatives

Following the 2016 peace agreement, Colombia implemented one of the world's largest contemporary reintegration programmes which focussed on former members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia.

Former combatants received:

- Literacy programmes
- Secondary education equivalency
- Vocational training

Programmes emphasised:

- Agricultural cooperatives
- Coffee production
- Rural enterprises

- Small business management

### *Gender Dimension*

Women's participation became a major focus because many female ex-combatants had occupied leadership positions during the conflict. Programmes increasingly included:

- Women's entrepreneurship
- Leadership training
- Childcare support

## Ethiopia: Agricultural Technical and Vocational Education

Ethiopia offers one of the most extensive examples of rural skills development linked directly to agriculture through an Agricultural TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) System supported by the World Bank, German development agencies, and other bilateral donors

Agricultural colleges train extension workers who are then deployed to rural communities.

Training covers:

- Crop management
- Livestock production
- Irrigation
- Soil conservation

Unlike many vocational programmes focused on urban employment, Ethiopia's model recognises that most rural youth will remain within agricultural production. As a result, the programme helps disseminate improved farming techniques to millions of smallholder farmers.

## Government Programmes

## DDRR

The Disarmament, Demobilisation, Reintegration, and Repatriation (DDRR) programme is the cornerstone of the national stability strategy. Established officially in December 2018, it aims to protect the population and transition former fighters into civilian roles, specifically targeting those from the 14 armed groups that signed the 2019 peace agreement.

Stages of the DDRR Process:

1. Handing over weapons: The formal collection and documentation of arms and ammunition.
2. Medical examinations: Comprehensive health screenings to ensure fitness for reintegration.
3. Psycho-social support: Essential addressing of mental trauma to prevent a relapse into violence.
4. Identification: Formal registration and documentation of ex-combatants.
5. Remuneration: Provision of financial support and reinsertion kits to meet immediate needs.

The DDRR process in the Central African Republic is a multi-stage framework designed to transition combatants from 14 signatory armed groups into stable civilian or state security roles. Officially established in its current form in December 2018, the programme is managed by the National Execution Unit (UEPNDDRR) with extensive technical and logistical support from MINUSCA and funding from the World Bank.

This process follows a strictly defined sequence of operations:

- Eligibility and Intake: To enter the formal programme, combatants must meet specific criteria defined in the 2016 National DDR Strategy. This includes surrendering a functional or repairable firearm, or alternatively, 200 rounds of ammunition, eight hand grenades, or 10 rockets. Those seeking to join the national armed forces (Security Sector Reform - SSR) must be aged between 18 and 25.
- Disarmament and Demobilisation: This initial phase involves the formal handover of weapons, documentation, and the disposal of ammunition. On average, the physical disarmament of an individual combatant is completed in one day.
- Screening and Support: Combatants undergo medical examinations, receive psychosocial support to address conflict-related trauma, and are issued a formal disarmament certificate.
- Path Selection: Once demobilised, individuals select one of two transition paths: integration into the national security forces (SSR) or socio-economic reintegration into civilian life.

### *Training and Support Following Demobilisation*

For those choosing the civilian path, the support package is primarily delivered through the Reintegration of Ex-combatants Project (PREC). The current restructured PREC model provides a consolidated five-month training cycle. This typically begins with one month of civic education followed by four months of intensive vocational training.

### *Vocational Training Fields*

Training is tailored to local market demands and the needs of host communities, focusing on high-demand trades such as:

- Agropastoral Farming and Husbandry: These have been identified as the most successful long-term options for rural stability.
- Carpentry and Masonry: Critical for the reconstruction of community infrastructure.
- Tailoring and Commerce: Popular options for urban or semi-urban reintegration.
- Basic Information Technology (IT): Offered to youth-at-risk and ex-combatants in certain regional hubs.

### *Reinsertion and Reintegration Kits*

Upon completion of their training, ex-combatants receive start-up kits containing the materials and tools necessary to launch their chosen trade. This is often accompanied by livelihood guidance and, in some cases, associative start-up support where ex-combatants are encouraged to form cooperatives to prevent individual business failures.

### *Community Violence Reduction (CVR) as an Alternative*

Combatants who do not meet the strict eligibility requirements for the formal PNDDRR (such as those without functional weapons) are channeled into the Community Violence Reduction (CVR) programme. This programme offers shorter, three-month vocational cycles and focuses on social cohesion, ensuring that at-risk community members and ex-combatants work together on public works projects, such as building schools or drilling boreholes.

Vocational Training and the ACFPE The Central African Agency for Vocational Training and Employment (ACFPE) serves as the primary public service for labour development. It operates under a unique governance structure involving five board members: two from the private sector, two from labour unions, and one government official. To ensure sustainable funding independent of state budget fluctuations, the ACFPE is financed through a 2% payroll tax levied on private sector companies.

The ACFPE is the autonomous public body responsible for implementing employment planning and managing vocational training funds in the Central African Republic. Operating under the administrative oversight of the

Ministry of Labour, the agency pursues several key initiatives to enhance human capital and align skills with market demands:

- Dedicated Funding Mechanism: The ACFPE manages a mandatory 2% payroll tax levied on all formal private sector enterprises, which serves as the primary fiscal instrument for funding national vocational training programs.
- National Benchmarking and Occupational Mapping: In 2017, the agency launched a comprehensive mapping study of occupations to develop national training benchmarks for 30 specialized roles. These benchmarks, which began to be adopted in 2019, are intended to align domestic technical and vocational education and training (TVET) with regional standards.
- In-Company and Non-Formal Training: The agency conducts in-company training sessions based on specific demands from employers or the findings of its human resource surveys in the public and private sectors. This includes offering refresher courses and training included in an annual catalogue designed to strengthen company human resources.
- Support for Job Seekers and Entrepreneurs: The ACFPE organizes additional training sessions for job seekers and provides professional and personal training that encourages graduates to create their own micro-enterprises rather than relying solely on formal employment.
- Labour Market Observatory and Research: Acting as a training and employment observatory, the agency identifies training needs within companies, develops training plans on their behalf, and conducts research related to human resource development planning.
- Certification of Competencies: For those who complete its short vocational courses, the agency delivers certificates of competency, providing legal recognition of their skills within the national formal system.
- Infrastructure Management: The ACFPE manages its own training premises and operates a network of approximately 159 vocational training centres located in Bangui and various towns in the western part of the country.

While the ACFPE plays a central role, its initiatives face significant bottlenecks, including a lack of coordination between governance bodies and a geographic concentration of over 82% of training providers in the capital city, Bangui.

### *The Skills System and TVET Strategy*

The National Employment and Vocational Training Policy Framework Document (PNEFP), adopted in 2016, identifies skills development as a critical tool for social inclusion. It specifically targets vulnerable groups, including girls and demobilised soldiers, to ensure they have the qualifications required for socio-professional integration.

The National Employment and Vocational Training Policy Framework Document (PNEFP), adopted in 2016, was developed with assistance from the International Labour Office to provide a strategic response to the employment and social cohesion challenges exacerbated by the country's security crisis. The document serves as a primary tool to support job creation and strengthen social cohesion. It explicitly identifies the social inclusion of vulnerable groups as one of its fundamental guiding principles.

### *Targeted Vulnerable Groups*

The PNEFP identifies specific cohorts that require priority support for employment and vocational training, including:

- Youth: Specifically young men and women with no formal training or very poor qualifications.
- Conflict-Affected Individuals: This includes demobilized soldiers (ex-combatants), internally displaced persons, and refugees wishing to return to the CAR.

- Marginalised Populations: People living with disabilities, the long-term unemployed, and members of the diaspora.
- Migrant Families: The framework seeks to promote the integration of migrant families who have lived in the country for generations.

### *Strategic Importance of Youth Skills Development*

The framework recognizes that developing the skills of young people is of "critical importance" for several socio-economic reasons:

- Poverty Reduction: It aims to provide qualifications for youth who have had little or no schooling, helping them escape cycles of vulnerability.
- Market Integration: It facilitates entry into the labour market through recruitment by existing businesses or the creation of self-employment and individual entrepreneurial activities.
- Security and Peacebuilding: By providing productive alternatives, the framework explicitly seeks to reduce the tendency for violence and insecurity, noting that youth are often the primary targets for recruitment by armed groups.

The PNEFP operates alongside other national reforms, such as the National Strategy on TVET and the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan. It provides a policy basis for the activities of the Central African Agency for Vocational Training and Employment (ACFPE), which is tasked with the practical implementation of employment planning and managing training funds.

Benefits of Skills Development:

- Provides qualifications for vulnerable youth with limited or no prior schooling.
- Facilitates socio-professional integration into the labour market or entrepreneurship.
- Reduces youth recruitment into armed groups by providing viable economic alternatives.
- Promotes the integration of migrant families and minorities into local communities.

## Local Non-Governmental Efforts

The "Education in Emergencies" response is bolstered by local organisations such as *Action pour le développement de l'éducation en Centrafrique (ADEC)* and *Agir pour sauver la vie (ASV)*. A key innovation is the "Kundukua" initiative. Framed as a resilience-based community ownership model, this engagement platform allows local communities to develop and implement their own education support plans, ensuring continuity in areas where state access is constrained by insecurity.

## Recommendations

Despite the adoption of policies like the PNEFP, significant structural bottlenecks persist, requiring a more harmonised approach between the various ministries responsible for education and vocational training.

### *Structural Bottlenecks*

1. Infrastructure Deficits: Approximately 80% of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) establishments lack required workshops and laboratories, and most existing equipment is obsolete.
2. Teaching Quality and the 'Maître-Parents' System: Parents working as teachers make up 81% of the workforce. Most are untrained and lack the professional capacity to provide the gender-sensitive mentorship required to keep girls in school.
3. Funding Gaps: The UN Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan was only 41.3% funded by the end of 2025; the education sector received a mere 39.4% of its requirements.

4. Governance Bottlenecks: Coordination between the Ministry of Technical and Vocational Education and the Ministry of Vocational Training remains a challenge, exacerbated by the lack of a centralised information system for tracking student outcomes.
5. Skills Anticipation Gaps: Training remains overly theory-based and fails to align with the demands of the private sector or the specific needs of the agricultural and forestry sectors.

### *Strategic Recommendations*

The way forward must focus on the legal and political prioritisation of inclusive education to ensure the HDPN is fully realised.

- National Database: Developing a database for migrant workers to monitor their socio-professional integration and training needs.
- Climate Resilience: Investing in school infrastructure designed to withstand environmental shocks, as 30% of schools are currently damaged by weather annually.
- Standardisation and Harmonisation: Setting common benchmarks and certification frameworks to align all employment and training sectors with international quality standards.
- Inclusive Action Plans: Prioritising integrated education and protection approaches to address the specific needs of the 41,000 children with disabilities and to reduce dropout rates among girls and former youth associates of armed groups.

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC · BANGUI DECLARATION ON JOINT ACTIONS

SECTION 3 OF 7

# Food Security

Food security in rural developing areas is rarely the result of a single shortage or isolated policy failure. It is usually produced by a convergence of pressures: low agricultural productivity, fragile rural infrastructure, limited market access, climate variability, conflict, weak public services, household poverty, and poor nutritional outcomes. These pressures interact across the four established dimensions of food security: availability, access, utilisation, and stability. Food may be produced domestically yet remain inaccessible because roads are impassable, incomes are too low, or markets are disrupted. Households may obtain enough calories but still suffer malnutrition if diets lack protein, micronutrients, or safe water. Even where harvests improve, food security remains fragile if production depends on rain-fed agriculture, if post-harvest losses are high, or if conflict prevents farmers from reaching their fields.

Smallholder farming remains the backbone of rural livelihoods, but production is often constrained by limited access to improved seeds, fertiliser, tools, irrigation, extension services, finance, and reliable markets. Climate shocks compound these weaknesses. Droughts, floods, changing rainfall patterns, soil degradation, and pest outbreaks can quickly reduce yields, destroy household assets, and weaken local food systems. Poor transport networks and inadequate storage then magnify the impact of production shortfalls: farmers struggle to sell surpluses, consumers face higher prices, and a significant share of crops is lost before reaching markets. In these settings, food insecurity is both a production problem and a systems problem. It is not enough to grow more food; rural economies also need roads, storage, processing, market information, social protection, nutrition services, and institutions capable of coordinating investment over time.

CAR illustrates this wider rural development challenge in an acute form. The country has substantial agricultural potential, yet it remains unable to meet domestic food demand through national production alone. Agriculture accounts for a large share of economic activity and provides livelihoods for much of the rural population, but productivity remains low and the country continues to rely on imports for key staples, including rice. The food-security situation is severe. Between April and August 2026, around 2 million people—nearly one in three people in the country—were projected to face high levels of acute food insecurity, classified as IPC Phase 3 or above, including approximately 262,000 people in Emergency conditions. The IPC analysis identifies persistent armed conflict, population displacement, high food and fuel prices, weak household purchasing power, and a degraded road network as central drivers of the crisis.

In CAR, the food-security challenge begins with the structure of rural production. Farming is dominated by small-scale family agriculture, often using traditional manual methods on small plots. Cassava, maize, rice, sorghum, and millet are important staples, but rain-fed farming leaves production vulnerable to erratic rainfall and flooding. Farmers frequently lack improved seeds, fertiliser, mechanised tools, irrigation, and technical support. These constraints suppress yields and make it difficult for households to produce enough food even in relatively normal seasons. Livestock production also faces disease risks and weak veterinary coverage, while insecurity disrupts pastoral mobility and agricultural labour. As a result, the country's agricultural potential is not translated into reliable food availability.

A second constraint is access. CAR's geography and infrastructure make moving food difficult and expensive. Only a very small share of the road network is paved, and many rural areas become isolated during the rainy season. Poor roads increase transport costs, reduce farm-gate prices for producers, raise food prices for consumers, and weaken incentives for farmers to produce surpluses. Market isolation also limits access to

inputs and services. Even when food is available somewhere in the country, it may not reach deficit areas at an affordable price. Imported rice prices have remained elevated in recent years, while conflict, border disruptions, and fuel costs have further exposed households to price volatility. For poor households that depend heavily on markets, food insecurity is therefore driven not only by low production but also by weak purchasing power.

Nutritional availability is a third concern. Many households lack access to diverse and nutritious diets, clean water, sanitation, and adequate health services. Children, pregnant and breastfeeding women, displaced people, returnees, host communities, and people living with chronic illness are particularly vulnerable. Malnutrition weakens immunity, reduces cognitive development, and reinforces long-term poverty. For this reason, effective food-security policy in CAR must combine agricultural recovery with nutrition-sensitive interventions, school feeding, health services, safe water, and targeted support for vulnerable groups.

As a result, the government and its partners have increasingly framed food security as a long-term transformation agenda rather than only a humanitarian emergency. The National Development Plan 2024–2028, also associated with “Ambition 2028,” places agriculture, infrastructure, social services, and governance at the centre of national recovery. Its logic is that CAR cannot reduce poverty or food insecurity without revitalising rural production, linking farmers to markets, improving basic infrastructure, and strengthening state capacity outside the capital. Agriculture is presented not only as a source of food but also as a platform for employment, economic diversification, import substitution, and social stability.

The technical agricultural roadmap underpinning this ambition is the National Agricultural Investment, Food Security and Nutrition Programme, or PNIASAN. This framework seeks to modernise crop, livestock, fisheries, and forestry value chains while improving nutrition, resilience, research, extension, infrastructure, and institutional coordination. Its goals include higher agricultural growth, reduced food insecurity, lower child malnutrition, and an improved agricultural trade balance. In practical terms, this means expanding access to inputs, strengthening producer organisations, supporting rural credit, improving storage and processing, and promoting climate-smart practices. Yet the framework also reveals a major constraint: agriculture receives a limited share of public expenditure, well below the African Union’s Maputo target of allocating 10 percent of national budgets to agriculture. The central policy challenge is therefore not only designing plans, but also financing and implementing them at sufficient scale.

One of the most visible government-backed initiatives is the Mahasakthi agro-industrial partnership, a large public-private investment centred on sugarcane and cassava production and processing. The project is intended to develop tens of thousands of hectares, integrate smallholders through contract farming, create buyback arrangements, generate employment, and build agro-processing capacity. Its significance lies in its attempt to address several food-system bottlenecks simultaneously: production, processing, market certainty, employment, and energy generation through sugarcane residues. If implemented effectively, such a model could reduce import dependency and provide a more predictable market for farmers. However, its success will depend on land governance, local participation, repair and maintenance capacity, quality control, transparent contract arrangements, and the ability of institutions to manage a large-scale partnership in a fragile environment.

Another important government-led approach is Home-Grown School Feeding. School feeding is often viewed primarily as a social protection or education intervention, but in CAR it also functions as a rural development strategy. By procuring food locally, the programme can create a stable market for smallholder farmers while improving children’s nutrition and school attendance. Plans to expand the programme to hundreds of schools and reach large numbers of students are therefore significant because they link immediate nutritional support with local agricultural demand. The World Food Programme has highlighted home-grown school feeding as a foundation for strengthening community resilience and food systems. Its potential is particularly strong where procurement is predictable, farmer groups are organised, storage and transport are available, and meals are nutritionally diverse.

Alongside national initiatives, multilateral programmes provide much of the operational support needed to address immediate food insecurity and rebuild agricultural capacity. The World Bank's Emergency Food Crisis Response Project has supported hundreds of thousands of smallholder farmers with seeds, tools, training, public works, and post-harvest techniques. Its purpose is to help households resume production, protect livelihoods, and strengthen resilience in the face of food-price inflation and conflict-related disruption. PRUCAC, another World Bank-supported emergency food-security initiative, also focuses on agricultural inputs, livestock vaccines, cash transfers, training, and support to vulnerable households. Together, these programmes respond to the urgent reality that many households need both food assistance and the means to restart production.

The African Development Bank and the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program support the PARSANKO project in Kémo and Ouaka. This initiative combines agricultural production support with community resilience, rural infrastructure, water points, storage facilities, training, nutrition awareness, school feeding, and empowerment of women and youth. Its design reflects the fact that food insecurity is spatially uneven and must be addressed through local systems. By rehabilitating roads and productive infrastructure, supporting farmer access to services, and strengthening community initiatives, PARSANKO attempts to move beyond short-term relief toward durable local resilience.

The World Food Programme's Country Strategic Plan for 2023–2027 brings together emergency food assistance, nutrition support, school meals, farmer support, logistics, and resilience-building. WFP's role is particularly important because it operates across the humanitarian–development spectrum. In areas facing acute crisis, food and cash assistance remain essential to protect lives and prevent negative coping strategies. But WFP also supports early recovery, local procurement, school feeding, nutrition prevention, and food-system strengthening. This dual role reflects the reality that CAR cannot simply choose between emergency response and long-term development; it needs both simultaneously.

Bilateral and regional partners also play a role. European Union and Swedish support has contributed to humanitarian assistance, food security, protection, water, sanitation, logistics, resilience, and recovery planning. Such assistance helps fill critical gaps in a context where national resources are limited and humanitarian needs remain high. However, donor support is most effective when it aligns with national priorities, strengthens local institutions, and avoids fragmentation. Coordination is therefore central. CAR has attempted to improve food-system governance by placing coordination closer to the Prime Minister's Office and organising work through thematic groups on governance, food security, gender and climate convergence, monitoring, and resource mobilisation. This decentralised and cross-sector approach recognises that agriculture ministries alone cannot solve food insecurity; transport, finance, education, health, water, social protection, security, and local government all matter.

Taken together, the schemes currently present in CAR show a gradual shift from emergency relief toward food-system transformation. Emergency programmes provide seeds, tools, cash, food, and livestock support to households in crisis. Agricultural recovery projects rebuild production capacity. Infrastructure investments aim to reconnect producers with markets. Storage and processing interventions seek to reduce post-harvest losses. Nutrition and school feeding programmes address utilisation while creating demand for local produce. Governance reforms attempt to improve coordination and national ownership. Private-sector partnerships seek to mobilise investment and build agro-industrial capacity. Climate-smart agriculture and resilience programmes aim to reduce vulnerability to future shocks.

Ultimately, food security in CAR is both a humanitarian priority and a state-building challenge. The country's agricultural potential is real, but it cannot be realised through production support alone. It depends on peace, infrastructure, institutional capacity, inclusive investment, and sustained coordination between government, communities, and international partners. The initiatives already underway form the basis of a more coherent response. Their collective value lies in addressing different parts of the same system: immediate hunger, rural production, market access, nutrition, resilience, and governance. If these efforts can be adequately financed,

locally owned, and implemented in a conflict-sensitive way, they offer a pathway through which CAR can move gradually from chronic food insecurity toward a more resilient and self-sustaining food system.

## Bilateral Initiatives

The European Union provides essential funding for the humanitarian response and multi-sectoral aid in CAR. The EU has announced significant humanitarian aid packages for the region, focusing on food assistance, nutrition, and protection for conflict-affected and displaced populations. Major bilateral contributions also come from the United States, Germany, and Sweden (Sida), whose support is vital for maintaining essential social services and bridging the gap between emergency relief and long-term development.

### *The European Union (EU)*

The EU's activities are primarily coordinated through the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO).

- Funding and Crisis Response: For 2026, the EU has allocated €22 million for humanitarian aid, following a €24.2 million contribution in 2025. A specific portion of this funding, €4.5 million, is dedicated to addressing the consequences of the Sudanese refugee crisis within CAR.
- Multi-Sectoral Support: EU-funded humanitarian response covers essential needs including food assistance, agricultural support, health services, and education in emergencies. All EU aid is integrated with a protection mandate, prioritising the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence and creating safe educational environments for children.
- Logistics and Access: To ensure aid reaches remote and insecure areas, the EU provides vital funding for the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS). This is critical because CAR's degraded road network and widespread violence make reaching vulnerable populations extremely dangerous.
- The Békou Fund: This EU multi-donor fund specifically supports resilience in the Kémo district, working to improve access to drinking water and strengthening the capacity of the National Water and Sanitation Agency (ANEA).
- Strategic Planning: The EU, alongside the World Bank and UN, provided the technical and financial support necessary to design the government's overarching recovery and peacebuilding framework, the RCPCA.

### *Sweden*

Sweden provides its bilateral assistance through the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), focusing heavily on the intersection of WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) and food security.

- Financial Commitments: In 2025, Sweden's allocation to CAR totalled 72 million SEK.
- Implementing Partnerships: Sweden operates through a diverse range of international NGOs and UN agencies to deliver aid directly to communities. For 2025, its primary funding partners included:
- UNICEF: 14 million SEK for children's services.
- ICRC: 12 million SEK for protection and emergency response.
- NRC (Norwegian Refugee Council): 10 million SEK.
- Oxfam: 9 million SEK, part of a new three-year humanitarian partnership aimed at helping populations regain autonomy through agricultural revitalisation.
- Other NGO Partners: 9 million SEK each to Action Against Hunger (AAH), the International Rescue Committee (IRC), and Première Urgence Internationale (PU-I).

- Multilateral Collaboration: Sweden is also recognised as a key donor support pillar for the World Food Programme (WFP) in CAR, contributing to the strategic goals of achieving "Zero Hunger" through resilient food systems.

## Multilateral Initiatives

# EFCRP

The Emergency Food Crisis Response Project (EFCRP), a major multilateral initiative funded by the World Bank, has committed $100 million to strengthen food production and household resilience in the Central African Republic. This project aims to reach 700,000 farmers and has already made significant progress, providing agricultural assets and services to over 687,000 producers, nearly a third of whom are women. Beyond direct agricultural support, the EFCRP creates temporary employment through labour-intensive public works, such as the rehabilitation of Bangui's drainage system, which has generated nearly 500,000 person-days of work to date.

### *Core Objectives and Funding*

The primary development objectives of the EFCRP are to increase food production and improve the resilience of targeted smallholder farmers and food-insecure households in affected areas. Active since October 2021, the project has received multiple rounds of funding, bringing the total commitment to $100 million (consisting of an initial $50 million plus two additional $25 million financing packages).

### *Key Project Components*

The project is structured around three main implementation pillars:

- Support for Increased Food Production ($67.5 million): Focuses on the distribution of essential agricultural inputs (seeds, tools, and fertilizers) and expanding animal health campaigns.
- Labour-Intensive Public Works (LIPW) for Resilience ($22 million): Creates temporary employment for vulnerable individuals through the rehabilitation of agricultural infrastructure and urban drainage systems.
- Project Management ($10.5 million): Supports the administrative and operational oversight of the project.

### *Significant Achievements and Results (as of late 2025)*

The EFCRP has made substantial progress towards its targets, with its implementation status rated as "Satisfactory" by the World Bank in November 2025:

- Reaching Farmers: A total of 687,924 farmers have been reached with agricultural assets or services, representing over 98% of the final project target.
- Input Distribution: Between February and September 2025, the project distributed 9,557 metric tons of agricultural inputs (including cassava cuttings, maize, groundnuts, and rice) to over 47,000 vulnerable households—nearly double the initial target.
- Post-Harvest Technologies: To reduce spoilage (which can claim up to 30% of local yields), over 21,000 households are now using post-harvest technologies, supported by the construction of 36 drying areas and 36 storage facilities.
- Employment Generation: The project has generated nearly 496,000 person-days of temporary work, benefiting 39,171 individuals.
- Livestock Support: Over 34,600 animals have been vaccinated or treated for common diseases to protect vital household assets.

### *Gender Inclusion and Resilience*

The EFCRP places a strong emphasis on gender equality, with women accounting for approximately 30% of the beneficiaries in labour-intensive public works and 52% of participants in recent seed distribution campaigns. By providing improved inputs and social safety nets, the project aims to equip these producers with the tools necessary to maintain stable household food supplies and resist future climate or conflict-related shocks.

## PRUCAC

The World Bank also manages the Emergency Food Security Response Project (PRUCAC), a $50 million programme dedicated to immediate support for smallholders and livestock producers. This initiative focuses on the distribution of essential agricultural inputs, such as seeds and tools, to 329,000 smallholder farmers. Furthermore, it addresses the needs of the livestock sector by distributing vaccines to 72,000 producers and provides a social safety net through direct cash transfers to vulnerable populations.

### *Core Objectives and Targets*

The project aims to mitigate the impact of the ongoing food crisis by boosting domestic production and protecting the livelihoods of the most vulnerable rural populations. Its primary targets include:

- Smallholder Support: Providing essential agricultural inputs, such as seeds and tools, to 329,000 smallholder farmers.
- Livestock Protection: Distributing vaccines to 72,000 livestock producers to safeguard animal assets against common diseases.
- Social Safety Nets: Implementing direct cash transfers to vulnerable populations to provide an immediate buffer against food insecurity.

### *Implementation and Training*

PRUCAC is implemented through a collaborative partnership between the CAR Ministry of Agriculture, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and the World Food Programme (WFP). Beyond the physical distribution of goods, the project focuses on:

- Technical Training: Educating farmers in modern agricultural and post-harvest techniques to reduce waste and maximize yields.
- Conflict Adaptation: Helping individuals displaced by violence transition into new livelihoods. For example, the project has supported former cattle herders in transitioning to sedentary farming after losing their livestock to conflict.

### *Measurable Impact*

The project has delivered significant results in a short timeframe. Between September 2022 and June 2023, local food production among beneficiaries increased by 250%, rising from 28,000 tons to 73,000 tons. This surge in production has been described as a "game changer" for rural communities, directly improving nutrition and community-level resilience against climate and conflict risks.

## PARSANKO project

Focusing on specific districts, the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme (GAFSP) have approved $27.8 million for the Enhanced Resilience in Kémo and Ouaka Districts (PARSANKO) project. This initiative adopts a community-led model by establishing 1,000 Resilience Cells (CdR), which integrate technical training via Farmer Field Schools with financial inclusion through Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs). The project also invests in critical infrastructure, including the rehabilitation of 400 kilometres of rural roads and the construction of 520 water points. The project is

implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development with technical assistance provided by the FAO.

### *Location and Target Beneficiaries*

PARSANKO operates specifically in the Kémo and Ouaka districts, a strategic transition zone between the insecure eastern regions and the more stable west. The project aims to reach approximately 45,400 households (235,000 people), including smallholder farmers, host communities, and internally displaced persons (IDPs). A key priority of the initiative is gender inclusion, with a mandate that at least 50% of the direct beneficiaries must be women.

### *Core Project Components*

The project is structured around three primary pillars designed to address the root causes of food insecurity:

- Component A: Rural Development and Basic Services: This component focuses on scaling up the "Resilience Cells" (CdR) approach. This community-led model integrates Farmer Field Schools (FFS) for technical training, Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA) for financial inclusion, and DIMITRA clubs to foster social cohesion. Additionally, it seeks to improve nutrition for 50,000 children and construct 520 water points to provide clean drinking water to 100,000 people.
- Component B: Agro-Pastoral Production and Infrastructure: This pillar aims to boost productivity by training 50 master trainers and 500 FFS facilitators, and distributing improved seeds to 25,000 farmers. It also includes a major animal health campaign providing vaccinations to 16,000 households. For infrastructure, the project utilizes a Community-Driven Development (CDD) approach to rehabilitate 400 kilometres of rural roads and other vital agricultural sites.
- Component C: Post-Harvest Management and Marketing: To reduce the high levels of spoilage that affect Central African harvests, this component disseminates techniques to reduce storage losses and promotes the valorisation of agro-pastoral products. It specifically supports 400 producer groups and provides technical training kits to 1,000 young people (50% male and 50% female) to foster non-farm rural livelihoods and entrepreneurship.

### *Objectives and Impact Targets*

The overarching goal of PARSANKO is to sustainably improve food security and nutrition while reducing the food insecurity rate in its intervention areas—targeting a reduction from 50% to 25% in Ouaka and from 30% to 20% in Kémo. By modernising the primary sector and strengthening local governance, the project seeks to move these communities toward structural economic emergence and greater resilience against future climate or conflict-related shocks.

## PARCA

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) leads the Agricultural Recovery and Resilience Programme (PARCA), a $63 million initiative designed to promote climate-resilient agribusiness. PARCA focuses on structuring inclusive value chains and strengthening the capacity of national institutions, such as the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, to manage these systems effectively. The programme aims to integrate small-scale producers into wider markets through the development of six agricultural processing centres and the use of innovative financial mechanisms.

PARCA is designed to transition the Central African Republic's agricultural sector from subsistence to a competitive, inclusive, and resilient agribusiness model. Valued at approximately US$63.04 million, the programme is co-financed by IFAD (US$20.05 million), the Adaptation Fund (US$23.04 million), the CAR government (US$9.62 million), local partner banks (US$5.85 million), and the project participants themselves (US$4.49 million).

### *Programme Objectives and Target Groups*

The primary development objective of PARCA is to sustainably increase the incomes and food security of rural households while strengthening their capacity to adapt to recurrent climate and economic shocks.

- Geographic Reach: The programme operates in eight prefectures: Lobaye, Ombella-M'poko, Kémo, Ouaka, Ouham, Ouham-Pendé, Nana-Gribizi, and Nana-Mambéré, covering roughly 37% of the national population.
- Targeting Strategy: PARCA directly targets 30,000 households (150,000 people). Consistent with IFAD's mainstreaming priorities, at least 40% of participants must be women and 40% must be youth. The programme also specifically includes internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees (10%), as well as Indigenous Peoples and persons with disabilities (5%).

### *Implementation Components*

The programme is structured around four complementary components designed to address the entire agricultural value chain:

- Component 1: Development of Inclusive and Resilient Value Chains (US$40.18M): This component focuses on the sustainable intensification of production through climate-smart practices. Activities include diversifying incomes via market gardening and livestock, revitalising the coffee and sesame sectors, and improving nutrition through school feeding programmes. It also funds critical infrastructure such as collection centres, rural roads, and six agricultural processing centres.
- Component 2: Institutional, Regulatory, and Organizational Environment (US$13.03M): This pillar seeks to create a professionalised agribusiness ecosystem by structuring and formalising producer organisations (POs) and micro-enterprises. It supports the co-construction of value-chain policies and provides institutional strengthening for the Ministry of Agriculture (MADR) and the Ministry of Livestock (MESA) through digitalisation and equipment.
- Component 3: Programme Coordination and Governance (US$9.21M): This component provides the technical and financial backbone of PARCA, managed by an international technical assistance team working alongside national counterparts. The strategy involves a gradual transfer of expertise to national institutions to ensure local ownership after the eight-year programme concludes.
- Component 4: Recovery from Climate-Related Disasters (US$0.62M): Known as the RED component, this is a contingency fund activated only after an official government declaration of disaster. It provides emergency support, such as resilient seeds and livestock kits, to safeguard the livelihoods of vulnerable households during extreme weather events or surges in conflict.

### *Theory of Change and Sustainability*

The programme's Theory of Change posits that if producers have access to quality inputs and climate-smart techniques, they will see higher yields and more stable incomes. When combined with modern processing hubs and innovative financial mechanisms like agricultural credit and guarantees, these improvements will reduce post-harvest losses and attract private investment to rural areas.

To ensure post-project sustainability, PARCA delegates the management of processing centres to private operators selected via competitive bidding, while collection centres are managed directly by POs under formal contracts. Furthermore, the integration of programme data into the Ministry of Agriculture's permanent information system is intended to maintain agricultural monitoring and analysis long after IFAD's involvement ends.

### *Risk Management*

The overall inherent risk for PARCA is rated as Substantial. Major risks include political instability and general elections, macroeconomic inflation, and high climate vulnerability. Mitigation strategies include the use of

phased financing, regular political dialogue, and the strict geographical targeting of interventions to avoid "red zones" characterized by active conflict.

## Food and Nutrition Security Emergency Facility

A separate $5.39 million initiative, the Food and Nutrition Security Emergency Facility, was approved by the African Development Bank in 2022 to provide a rapid boost to domestic production. The primary objective of this facility is to produce an additional 32,000 tons of foodstuffs, thereby improving the food security situation for approximately 100,000 vulnerable individuals across the country.

### *Funding and Scope*

The facility represents a strategic investment of US$5.39 million designed to address immediate shortfalls in domestic food availability. It operates within a broader continental framework that advocates for increased financing to specifically boost the productivity of African smallholder farmers in fragile contexts.

### *Key Objectives and Targets*

The primary aim of the facility is to catalyse a swift increase in domestic agricultural yields to reduce the nation's reliance on expensive food imports. Its specific impact targets include:

- Production Increase: Seeking to produce an additional 32,000 tons of foodstuffs to alleviate local supply constraints and stabilise prices.
- Beneficiary Reach: Directly improving the food security situation for approximately 100,000 vulnerable individuals across the country.
- Smallholder Empowerment: The initiative aligns with CAR government priorities to ensure small-scale producers receive targeted input subsidies and extension services, enabling them to transition from subsistence farming to active participants in domestic markets.

By focusing on rapid productivity boosts, this facility serves as a critical mechanism for the government to mitigate the immediate effects of global food price inflation and local supply chain disruptions.

## WFP Country Strategic Plan (2023-2027)

Joint programming between the FAO and WFP ensures that immediate humanitarian relief is linked with long-term resilience through initiatives like the Bangui Convergence Dialogue. This coordination involves aligning WFP's Country Strategic Plan (2023–2027), which provides emergency food assistance and promotes home-grown school meals, with FAO's focus on local seed multiplication. These agencies work together to integrate agroforestry and agro-pastoralism into national climate action plans, ensuring a unified approach to food system transformation.

The plan serves as a roadmap to transition the nation from emergency humanitarian management to structural economic reconstruction and long-term resilience. The plan prioritises support for crisis-affected populations, including internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees, while using food systems transformation as a foundation for stability.

The plan is structured around several core strategic pillars:

### 1. Emergency Response and Nutrition Support

WFP continues to play a critical role in addressing acute hunger through the distribution of food and cash-based assistance to those affected by conflict and climate shocks.

- Targeted Nutrition: Working with the Ministry of Health, the plan implements prevention activities for malnutrition, specifically targeting children aged 6–23 months and pregnant or breastfeeding women.
- Specialised Care: A specialised operational pilot aims to improve the quality of treatment for moderate wasting in children under five, providing fortified foods to approximately 36,000 children daily.

### 2. Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF)

The HGSF initiative is a permanent pillar of the CSP, designed to integrate education with rural economic stimulus.

- Scaling Up: The programme aims to expand from an initial 292 schools to 575 schools by 2027, reaching roughly 400,000 students.
- Market Creation: By sourcing meals locally, WFP intends to provide a predictable market for approximately 20,000 smallholder farmers, encouraging them to produce a surplus and boost their incomes.

### 3. Support for Smallholder Farmers and Value Chains

Through the Smallholder Agricultural Market Support (SAMS) approach, WFP assists shock-affected communities in restoring productive assets.

- Resilience Building: This includes training in post-harvest techniques to reduce waste and facilitating access to financing and markets.
- Gender Transformation: Over 50% of the smallholders involved in these value chain activities are women, ensuring that economic empowerment reaches the most vulnerable household members.

### 4. Capacity Strengthening and Governance

A major objective of the CSP is to reduce dependency on external aid by empowering national institutions.

- Institutional Support: WFP collaborates with local authorities to strengthen their ability to design and manage sustainable food systems and social safety nets.
- Policy Alignment: The plan supports the government in developing a National School Feeding Policy and a transition strategy to move towards a fully nationalised programme.

### 5. Humanitarian Logistics (UNHAS)

Because the CAR possesses a severely degraded road network, WFP manages the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) to maintain the plan's reach.

- Critical Access: UNHAS remains the only reliable means of transport for aid workers and life-saving supplies to 19 regular and 7 ad hoc destinations in remote or insecure areas.

### 6. Climate and Food System Convergence

Following the Bangui Convergence Dialogue in December 2025, WFP has integrated its strategic goals with national climate action (NDC 3.0). This involves promoting agroforestry and agropastoralism to ensure that food production goals are resilient to the irregular rainfall and extreme weather patterns common in the CAR.

## International Initiatives Worth Considering

## Niger: Sahel Food Crisis Prevention and Seasonal Hunger Response

Niger sits in the Sahel “hunger belt” where rainfall variability is extreme.

**Programme examples include Cash Transfers for Seasonal Hunger (Lean Season Assistance),** implemented by:

- World Food Programme
- Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
- EU humanitarian funding

During "hunger season" (pre-harvest), monthly cash transfers are sent to rural households on order to prevent the distress sale of livestock, migration, and spikes in malnutrition

Another programme is the FAO Farmer Field Schools and Resilience Building project.

Activities include:

- Soil restoration (zaï pits, stone bunds)
- Agroforestry (Faidherbia albida trees)
- Millet/sorghum improvement
- Livestock vaccination

### *Gender dimension*

Women's cooperatives are introduced for:

- Shea butter processing
- Small livestock (goats, poultry)

## Kenya: Hunger Safety Nets and Arid Lands Development

Kenya is a key example of long-term adaptation to arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs). Programmes include the Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP) implemented by the Government of Kenya with support from the World Bank and UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office.

The programme includes unconditional cash transfers to extremely poor households in arid counties, alongside innovation support via biometric registration, mobile cash payments, and shock-responsive expansion during drought

Another programme in place in Kenya is the Ending Drought Emergencies Strategy: a multi-donor initiative funded by the Food and Agriculture Organization and World Food Programme.

Interventions include:

- Livestock disease control
- Water boreholes
- Veterinary services
- Pastoralist mobility corridors

### *Gender dimension*

- Women often excluded from livestock ownership systems
- Programmes increasingly support milk value chains controlled by women

## Ethiopia: Productive Safety Nets + Agricultural Transformation

Ethiopia is the most cited large-scale example of shifting from emergency food aid to predictable rural safety nets and agricultural productivity systems. Productive Safety Net Programmes (PSNPs) are suppored by

- World Bank
- Food and Agriculture Organization
- Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
- United States Agency for International Development

Instead of repeated food aid, households receive **predictable transfers** (food or cash) in exchange for participation in public works

### *Public Works Component*

- Terracing and soil conservation
- Road building
- Water harvesting structures
- Small-scale irrigation

**Direct Support is provided for the e**lderly, disabled people, and households with low labour output capacity.

The FAO Agricultural Growth Programme (AGP) has also been implemented in Ethiopia, focussing on smallholder agriculture.

The programme is delivered through:

- Irrigation schemes
- Cooperative strengthening
- Supply chains for key agricultural inputs (seeds)

### *Gender component*

- Women's access to extension agents improved
- Targeting of female-headed households for livestock packages

Ethiopia's model assumes that food security is achieved by stabilising incomes, not just delivering food.

### *Government Policies*

## The National Development Plan (2024–2028)

Launched as "Ambition 2028," the National Development Plan represents a strategic pivot from "emergency to emergence". In September 2025, the government secured $9 billion in financial commitments at an investment forum in Casablanca. The strategy targets four priority areas: Infrastructure, Agriculture, Social Services, and Governance. However, the plan faces significant risks regarding financial absorptive capacity within government ministries, where weak institutional oversight may hinder the efficient deployment of capital. The NDP seeks to alleviate food security issues through the following strategic objectives and implementation pillars:

### *1. Agriculture as an Engine for Economic Diversification*

The PND places sustainable agriculture at the absolute core of its strategy to diversify the national economy and reduce the country's precarious reliance on food imports, particularly rice. Given that agriculture employs

approximately 80% of the rural population and accounts for over 50% of GDP, the plan seeks to transform the primary sector into a driver of inclusive growth and poverty reduction.

### *2. Modernisation of the Sector*

To address low productivity, the PND proposes specific structural reforms aimed at modernising traditional farming practices:

- Mechanisation and Inputs: The plan promotes the introduction of mechanised tools and improved access to agricultural assets to move beyond manual "slash and burn" techniques.
- Financial Inclusion: It seeks to establish targeted credit facilities for rural producers, addressing the chronic lack of access to financing that currently hinders smallholder growth.
- Capacity Building: The plan prioritises farmer training programmes to disseminate modern techniques and climate-smart practices.

### *3. Infrastructure and Market Integration*

A major pillar of the PND is the modernisation of infrastructure to connect the landlocked state to regional markets. This is critical for food security as only 2.5% of CAR's road network is currently paved, isolating farmers from trade hubs. The PND focuses on:

- Road Rehabilitation: Rebuilding rural tracks to integrate isolated farming communities into trading networks.
- Energy and Telecoms: Improving energy access and telecommunications to support agro-industrial processing and market information systems.

### *4. Integration of Social Protection and Nutrition*

The PND explicitly incorporates social safety nets into its long-term development framework:

- School Feeding: Following instructions from the President, the Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF) programme has been included in the PND as a permanent pillar of human capital development. This seeks to improve student nutrition while creating a guaranteed market for local smallholders.
- Budgetary Commitments: The plan mandates the inclusion of a substantial annual budget line specifically for school meals to ensure the sustainability of these interventions.

### *5. Climate Resilience and Sustainability*

Recognising CAR's high vulnerability to climate shocks, the PND calls for the integration of conflict-sensitive climate adaptation into all agricultural projects. The plan seeks to align food production goals with the country's climate plan (NDC 3.0), focusing on agroforestry and agro-pastoralism to protect natural resources while increasing yields.

### *6. Governance and Resource Mobilisation*

To fund these ambitious goals, the government secured $9 billion in financial commitments during an investor roundtable in Casablanca in September 2025. To ensure these funds effectively reach the ground, the PND supports a decentralised governance model under the Prime Minister's Office, designed to foster local ownership by engaging civil society, youth, and indigenous communities in the transformation of food systems.

## The PNIASAN Framework and Funding Gaps

The National Agricultural Investment and Food Security and Nutrition Programme (PNIASAN) serves as the roadmap for sector modernisation, targeting a minimum 6% annual growth in agricultural GDP. Despite these goals, the sector suffers from chronic underfunding; the state typically allocates less than 3% of the national budget to agriculture, failing to meet the 10% target mandated by the African Union's Maputo Declaration.

While plans like those within the National Development Plan set high-level goals, PNIASAN defines the specific technical and economic strategies needed to move the country toward agricultural emergence.

### *Core Objectives and Targets*

The framework seeks to transform the primary sector from a tool for survival into a driver of national wealth. Its primary targets include:

- Economic Growth: Inducing a minimum annual growth rate of 6% in agricultural GDP.
- Hunger Reduction: Stabilising and reducing the national food insecurity rate to a target of 15%.
- Malnutrition Control: Systematically reducing the prevalence of chronic and acute child malnutrition.
- Trade Balance: Improving the agricultural trade balance to reduce the country's precarious reliance on expensive food imports.

PNIASAN operates through six distinct pillars designed to address every aspect of the food system:

1. Crop Value Chain Development: Enhancing the production and commercialisation of both food crops (cassava, maize) and cash crops.
2. Livestock Value Chain Development: Restoring animal assets and improving veterinary services.
3. Fisheries and Forestry: Promoting aquaculture and the sustainable management of non-timber forest products.
4. Infrastructure and Research: Strengthening local communities through the rehabilitation of rural roads and supporting the Central African Institute for Agricultural Research (ICRA).
5. Emergency and Resilience: Coordinating emergency responses and cross-cutting social protection actions for the most vulnerable.
6. Institutional Coordination: Strengthening the capacity of the Ministry of Agriculture to manage sectoral policies effectively.

### *Implementation Strategies*

To achieve these goals, PNIASAN outlines several key implementation mechanisms:

- Input Modernisation: Facilitating access to improved, climate-resilient seeds and mechanised tools to replace traditional "slash and burn" manual cultivation.
- Advisory Support: Retraining agents from national agencies (ACDA and ANDE) to serve as "master trainers" who educate farmers in sustainable practices via Farmer Field Schools (FFS).
- Policy Formulation: Developing critical missing frameworks, such as the National Seed Policy and a National Food Security Stockpile Policy, to manage food aid and prevent future crises.
- Community-Led Development: Encouraging local authorities to identify and maintain their own priority infrastructure projects to ensure long-term sustainability.

### *Challenges and Financial Constraints*

Despite its comprehensive design, PNIASAN has struggled with a significant public financing gap. The programme requires an estimated investment of $650 million, yet several barriers remain:

- Budgetary Shortfalls: National spending on agriculture has consistently stayed below 3% of the budget—far short of the 10% target mandated by the African Union's Maputo Declaration.
- Diversion of Resources: Security crises have repeatedly forced the government to redirect agricultural funds toward military and immediate humanitarian expenditures.
- Off-Track Status: Due to these constraints, the African Union's 2018 biennial review gave CAR a score of just 2.4 out of 10, concluding that the country is currently off-track for its PNIASAN commitments.

## The Mahasakthi Agro-Industrial Deal

The $1.2 billion public-private partnership with the Indian conglomerate Mahasakthi Group serves as a primary test case for the NDP's agricultural pillar. To alleviate food security issues, the deal focuses on the following strategic objectives and implementation methods:

- Revitalisation of Key Sectors: The project aims to develop 30,000 hectares of fertile land, specifically allocating 20,000 hectares for sugarcane and 10,000 hectares for cassava. Cassava is a primary staple crop in CAR, and increasing its domestic production is vital for reducing the country's structural reliance on food imports.
- Hybrid Development Model: Implementation follows a dual approach where the Mahasakthi Group directly manages 15,000 hectares, while the remaining 15,000 hectares are farmed by local contract producers. To ensure meaningful participation, local entrepreneurs must farm a minimum of 5 hectares, a strategy designed to integrate more than 3,000 smallholders directly into a commercial supply chain.
- Market Stability and Buyback Guarantees: A critical component for food security is the guaranteed crop buyback system. This commitment by the Mahasakthi Group shields local farmers from the price volatility and market exclusion that often discourage smallholder investment in CAR.
- Job Creation and Economic Opportunity: The partnership is projected to generate over 100,000 direct and indirect jobs, ranging from field cultivation to high-tech agro-processing. By providing steady employment in a country where nearly 70% of the population relies on farming, the deal seeks to boost household purchasing power, a key driver of food access.
- Energy Production and Infrastructure: The deal includes the construction of an industrial complex featuring two co-generation power plants with a combined capacity of 70 megawatts (MW). These plants will be fueled primarily by sugarcane residue, supporting CAR's transition to cleaner energy while providing the power necessary for value-added agricultural processing.
- By modernising the primary sector and fostering an attractive environment for private investment, the Mahasakthi deal aims to transform the rural economy into an engine of inclusive growth and resilience.

Strategic Caution: The success of this capital-intensive model is contingent upon establishing local machinery repair capacities and maintaining rigorous quality control to ensure marketability.

## Decentralised Governance and School Feeding

In 2023, the government moved food systems coordination to the Prime Minister's Office to address historical policy fragmentation. This includes five thematic working groups: Governance, Food Security, Gender-Climate Convergence, Monitoring and Implementation, and Resource Mobilisation.

A core component is the "Home-Grown School Feeding" (HGSF) programme. Expanding from a 45-school pilot to a target of 575 schools by 2027, the initiative aims to provide nutritious meals to 400,000 students. By sourcing exclusively from local smallholders, the programme creates a stable market for rural producers while incentivising school attendance.

These initiatives aim to move the country beyond emergency humanitarian assistance towards long-term resilience and economic stability.

### *Decentralised Food Systems Governance*

In 2023, the CAR government restructured its approach to food security by placing national coordination directly under the Prime Minister's Office. This shift was designed to address historical fragmentation where vertical governance structures often excluded key sectors, such as agriculture, from broader resilience and climate programmes.

- Aims and Objectives: The primary goal of this model is to foster local ownership and inclusivity. By decentralising coordination, the government seeks to engage grassroots stakeholders – including civil society, youth groups, and indigenous forest communities – directly in the transformation process. This approach aims to build capacity from the local level upwards, ensuring that national strategies are aligned with continental frameworks like the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP).
- Implementation Strategy: The governance model is structured around five thematic working groups: Governance; Food Security; Gender-Climate Convergence; Monitoring and Implementation; and Resource Mobilisation. A key implementation milestone was the December 2025 Convergence Dialogue in Bangui, which sought to align food systems with climate action (NDC 3.0). This led to the creation of a Convergence Action Group tasked with finalising an operational blueprint to integrate agroforestry and agro-pastoralism into national production strategies.

### *Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF)*

Launched officially in March 2024, the school feeding initiative is a central component of the government's strategy for human capital development and rural economic stimulus.

- Aims and Objectives: The programme has a dual purpose: improving nutrition and education for students while simultaneously stimulating the local economy. By providing healthy, locally sourced meals, the government aims to increase school enrolment, attendance, and retention rates, particularly for girls and vulnerable children affected by conflict. Concurrently, it creates a stable, predictable market for smallholder farmers, encouraging them to produce a surplus.
- Implementation Strategy:
- Scaling Up: The government plans to expand the programme from 292 schools to 575 schools by 2027. This target involves providing meals to approximately 400,000 students and creating a guaranteed market for roughly 20,000 smallholder farmers.
- Institutionalisation: To ensure sustainability, President Touadéra instructed the inclusion of school feeding in the National Development Plan (PND) 2024–2028 and the creation of a substantial annual budget line specifically for these meals. Furthermore, the School Canteen Management Unit was transformed into a National School Food Directorate with regional branches.
- Local Procurement and Management: In partnership with the World Food Programme (WFP), the initiative prioritises the purchase of local cereals and legumes. On the ground, daily management and meal preparation are often handled by parent and women's associations, frequently drawn from local "Resilience Cells" (CdRs), who contribute water, firewood, and condiments to the process.

## Recommendations

### 1. Bridge the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus Gap

International donors and multilateral institutions should shift from short-term humanitarian funding to flexible, multi-year transition grants.

- Recommendation: Prioritise funding for projects like the World Bank's EFCRP that combine immediate relief with long-term recovery, such as labour-intensive public works to rebuild agricultural infrastructure while providing temporary income.

### 2. Increase National Budgetary Allocations for Agriculture

The CAR government currently allocates less than 3% of its national budget to agriculture, significantly below the 10% target of the African Union's Maputo Declaration.

- Recommendation: Gradually increase domestic spending toward the 10% target to fund the PNIASAN operational roadmap.
- Recommendation: Ensure that large-scale private investments, such as the $1.2 billion Mahasakthi deal, are balanced with public support for smallholders through input subsidies and extension services.

### 3. Regulate Pastoral Movement and Mitigate Local Conflict

Seasonal migration has become a "conflict loop" due to the collapse of traditional regulatory systems.

- Recommendation: Establish a formal regulatory framework to demarcate clear movement corridors and community-managed water points.
- Recommendation: Create local conflict-resolution committees comprising both sedentary farmers and migratory pastoralists to manage land-use disputes peacefully.

### 4. Reduce Post-Harvest Losses and Develop Local Value Chains

Up to 30% of domestic yields are lost due to a lack of adequate storage and processing facilities.

- Recommendation: Scale up the construction of localized drying areas, storage warehouses, and agricultural processing centres (hubs) as seen in the PARCA and PARSANKO projects.
- Recommendation: Expand Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF) to reach the target of 575 schools by 2027, creating a guaranteed, predictable market for local smallholders.

### 5. Modernise Primary Production and Seed Systems

Productivity remains low due to a reliance on traditional "slash and burn" techniques and poor access to quality seeds.

- Recommendation: Support local seed producers' networks and the Central African Institute for Agricultural Research (ICRA) to ensure the multiplication and distribution of climate-resilient and disease-resistant seeds.
- Recommendation: Disseminate climate-smart agricultural practices (such as agroforestry and agro-pastoralism) through the Farmer Field School (FFS) model within the "Resilience Cells" (CdR) framework.

### 6. Improve Infrastructure and Market Integration

With only 2.5% of the road network paved, many farmers are isolated from regional trade.

- Recommendation: Prioritise the rehabilitation of rural tracks to connect production hubs in remote prefectures (like Vakaga and Haute-Kotto) to urban markets.
- Recommendation: Support the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) to maintain logistics and medical access in insecure regions until road infrastructure is sufficiently restored.

### 7. Strengthen Data Collection and Analytical Capacity

Reliable data is essential for targeting the most vulnerable populations, such as internally displaced persons (IDPs) and female-headed households.

- Recommendation: Provide consistent funding for the National IPC Technical Working Group to ensure regular, detailed food security assessments.
- Recommendation: Fully implement the decentralised food systems governance model under the Prime Minister's Office to ensure inclusive coordination between civil society and government.

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC · BANGUI DECLARATION ON JOINT ACTIONS

SECTION 4 OF 7

# Health

*Child mortality and vaccine availability*

CAR illustrates many of the most persistent health challenges facing rural, low-income, and conflict-affected contexts. Across such settings, health outcomes are shaped not only by disease burden, but by the wider conditions in which people live: distance from facilities, weak transport networks, shortages of trained workers, unreliable water and sanitation, recurrent food insecurity, low vaccination coverage, and fragile public financing.

The country's health crisis is therefore best understood as a convergence of clinical, nutritional, infrastructural, financial, and governance problems. Child and maternal mortality remain high; malaria, diarrhoeal disease, acute respiratory infections, and vaccine-preventable illnesses continue to cause avoidable deaths; and malnutrition weakens immunity while limiting children's cognitive and physical development. At the same time, many households face food insecurity, unsafe water, limited sanitation, and financial barriers to care. These factors reinforce each other: undernourished children are more vulnerable to infection, infectious disease worsens nutritional status, and families living far from functioning health facilities often delay or forgo treatment until illness becomes severe.

In rural developing-world contexts, child mortality is often driven by a cluster of highly preventable and treatable conditions: pneumonia, diarrhoeal disease, malaria, neonatal complications, and malnutrition. The same pattern is visible in CAR, where under-five mortality remains substantially above global development targets. Neonatal mortality also remains a major concern, reflecting gaps in skilled birth attendance, emergency obstetric care, antenatal care, postnatal follow-up, infection prevention, and timely referral. The risks faced by children and mothers are closely linked: when pregnant women cannot access safe delivery services, both maternal and newborn survival are compromised.

Malaria is one of the most important clinical drivers of mortality in CAR, particularly among children under five and pregnant women. Diarrhoeal disease, including disease linked to rotavirus, cholera, unsafe water, and poor sanitation, remains another major threat. Acute respiratory infections such as pneumonia further contribute to avoidable deaths. These illnesses are dangerous on their own, but their impact is magnified by malnutrition. Chronic malnutrition, often measured through stunting, can permanently affect cognitive development, educational attainment, and future productivity, while acute malnutrition increases the immediate risk of death during periods of crisis, displacement, conflict, or food shortage.

One of the defining features of CAR's health system is the difficulty of reaching care in time. Rural populations frequently live far from health facilities, and roads may be poor, seasonal, insecure, or impassable. Transport costs can be prohibitive, and emergency referral is often unavailable. These barriers mean that many child deaths occur at home or during transit rather than inside a health facility. The geography of care is therefore a determinant of survival: a treatable fever, obstructed labour, diarrhoeal episode, or respiratory infection can become fatal when families cannot reach a trained provider, a functioning facility, medicines, oxygen, blood, or emergency surgery.

Access is not only physical. Social and gender norms also affect whether and when care is sought. Experiences of dismissive treatment at the point of care can further reduce trust and discourage follow-up visits, including for immunisation. These issues show why health-system strengthening must involve community engagement,

respectful care, gender-sensitive programming, and practical mechanisms that bring services closer to households.

Vaccination is one of the most effective tools for reducing child mortality, yet CAR faces a severe immunisation deficit. Routine childhood vaccines protect against measles, polio, diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, tuberculosis, hepatitis B, pneumococcal disease, rotavirus, and other preventable infections. However, rural distance, weak cold-chain infrastructure, staff shortages, insecurity, and disrupted outreach have left many children under-immunised or entirely unreached. The existence of a large "zero-dose" cohort is especially concerning because it signals both biomedical vulnerability and exclusion from the wider primary health-care system.

CAR's immunisation recovery efforts respond directly to this gap. Schemes such as The Big Catch-Up and Zero Dose Zero Barrier are designed to identify under-immunised children, remove practical and social barriers, and restore routine vaccination after years of disruption. Mobile outreach teams, community tracing, father-focused engagement, and partnerships with civil society organisations seek to reach households that standard facility-based services miss. At the same time, support from Gavi, WHO, UNICEF, World Vision, and local organisations has helped extend the immunisation schedule, strengthen community mobilisation, and improve last-mile delivery. The introduction of the malaria vaccine in August 2024 is particularly significant because it targets one of the country's leading causes of child illness and death.

The Government of CAR has attempted to move beyond emergency humanitarian relief toward a more coordinated and durable health system. The National Health Development Plan, PNDS III for 2022–2026, provides the main framework for this shift. It sets out priorities for improving facility standards, strengthening epidemic preparedness, increasing health-sector staffing, modernising infrastructure, and coordinating partners around national objectives. Its scale, including an estimated financing need of about $2.97 billion, reflects the depth of the challenge: CAR is not merely filling service gaps, but attempting to rebuild the foundations of public health delivery.

Financing is central to this reform agenda. A large share of health funding has historically flowed off-budget through NGOs and multilateral partners, making it difficult for the state to plan, track expenditure, and align external support with national priorities. CAR's use of hybrid financing arrangements, donor coordination, household contributions, performance-based financing mechanisms, and a digital Health Resource Tracking system is intended to improve visibility and accountability. These tools matter because fragmented funding can produce fragmented services: one district may receive campaign-based vaccination support while another lacks basic staff, medicines, or referral capacity. Stronger financial tracking is therefore a governance intervention as much as an accounting exercise.

The proposed Assurance Maladie Universelle is another important component of the government's strategy. By seeking to protect around 2.4 million vulnerable people from catastrophic health costs, the scheme aims to reduce one of the major reasons families delay care: the fear that treatment will be unaffordable. In a country where poverty, displacement, and food insecurity already strain households, financial protection is essential to any credible move toward Universal Health Coverage. If implemented effectively, it could help shift care-seeking from crisis response to earlier treatment and prevention.

Because many of CAR's most serious health risks emerge far from hospitals, community-based delivery is a recurring theme across national and partner initiatives. Community midwives, trained traditional birth attendants, and community health workers are positioned as a bridge between households and the formal system. Their role includes identifying danger signs in pregnancy, encouraging facility delivery where possible, supporting antenatal and postnatal care, promoting immunisation, and helping families navigate referral pathways. The emphasis on roughly 1,200 community midwives and the training of matrons reflects an attempt to reduce preventable maternal and neonatal deaths by strengthening the first point of contact for rural women.

This community layer is also important for nutrition and food security. Health workers who are close to communities are better placed to identify wasting, refer severe acute malnutrition, support infant and young-child feeding, and connect households with nutrition services or humanitarian assistance. They can also reinforce WASH practices, encourage early treatment of diarrhoeal disease, and help maintain trust during vaccination campaigns. In CAR, where formal facilities may be distant or under-resourced, the community health platform is one of the most practical ways to connect prevention, treatment, nutrition, and surveillance.

International and multilateral support remains central to CAR's health sector. The SENI-Plus project, supported by the World Bank and the Global Financing Facility, is one of the most significant examples. It expands free targeted health care for women and children, supports the recruitment of health workers, strengthens rural service delivery, improves immunisation, and addresses supply-chain and transport constraints. Its importance lies in the way it links service access with system functions: care can only be free and effective if staff, medicines, supervision, logistics, and referral systems are also in place.

Other multilateral initiatives support the system from different angles. The African Network of Medical Excellence offers a regional approach to specialised care, including paediatrics, obstetrics, gynaecology, and tropical diseases, helping compensate for the limited availability of secondary and tertiary services within CAR. UNOPS contributes through infrastructure rehabilitation, including support to damaged health facilities and facilities such as Bangui Paediatric Hospital's neonatology unit, as well as rural connectivity projects and Global Fund implementation. WHO provides technical support across communicable and non-communicable diseases, maternal and child health, medicines access, health information systems, epidemic preparedness, and broader health-system strengthening.

Bilateral support complements this multilateral architecture. The French Development Agency (AFD) has emerged as a major development partner in CAR, working through a 2024 bilateral roadmap focused on scientific partnerships, state governance, and the protection of vulnerable groups. With an active project portfolio reported at €102.7 million across 15 projects by late 2025, AFD's role extends beyond direct clinical programming to include the institutional and infrastructural conditions that make health services more resilient.

AFD's support to the Institut Pasteur de Bangui is particularly relevant to disease surveillance, laboratory diagnostics, and paediatric care for febrile illnesses. In a country where malaria, respiratory infections, measles, cholera risks, and other communicable diseases can escalate quickly, laboratory and surveillance capacity are essential for early detection and response. AFD's funding to combat sexual and gender-based violence also addresses a major health and protection issue, recognising that health systems must respond not only to infectious disease and maternal-child mortality but also to trauma, violence, psychosocial needs, and access to survivor-centred care. Its work on public finance management, essential health expenditure, and rural connectivity indirectly strengthens health by improving the state's ability to fund services and by helping people reach hospitals during emergencies.

The schemes currently present in CAR show a gradual move from fragmented emergency response toward a more integrated model of health resilience. PNDS III provides the national framework; Assurance Maladie Universelle seeks to reduce financial barriers; performance-based financing and resource tracking aim to improve accountability; SENI-Plus expands targeted free care and strengthens service delivery; Gavi-supported initiatives attempt to close immunisation gaps; WHO, UNICEF, UNOPS, the Global Fund, and OCHA reinforce technical, logistical, infrastructural, and humanitarian capacities; and AFD supports diagnostics, protection, governance, and connectivity. None of these interventions alone can resolve CAR's health crisis, but together they address many of the bottlenecks that make preventable illness deadly.

The central challenge is coordination. CAR's health system depends heavily on external partners, yet long-term resilience requires that this support reinforce national systems rather than substitute for them. Funding must

be visible, services must be geographically equitable, community platforms must be trusted, and humanitarian interventions must connect wherever possible to routine primary health care.

## Bilateral Initiatives

In CAR, the French Development Agency (AFD) represents one the most significant bilateral partners. The AFD Group aligns its interventions with a bilateral roadmap endorsed in 2024, focusing on scientific partnerships, state governance, and the protection of vulnerable groups. As of late 2025, AFD had an ongoing project portfolio in CAR worth €102.7 million across 15 active projects.

Significant actions include:

- Scientific and Clinical Support (Institut Pasteur): AFD committed €9 million in grant funding to the Institut Pasteur de Bangui (IPB). This initiative, supported by technical assistance from Expertise France, aims to:
- Enhance laboratory diagnostic capacities for priority pathogens.
- Strengthen the national disease surveillance network.
- Improve care for pediatric patients presenting with febrile illnesses, a leading cause of child mortality.
- Combating Gender-Based Violence (GBV): In partnership with the Pierre Fabre and Denis Mukwege Foundations, AFD financed a €3 million grant to establish a comprehensive care centre in Bangui for victims of sexual and gender-based violence.
- Infrastructural and Social Reform: AFD supports the health sector indirectly by financing essential health expenditure and supporting public finance management to ensure macroeconomic stability. They also fund the PURIC project alongside the World Bank and UNOPS to improve rural connectivity, which is vital for patients trying to reach hospitals during emergencies.

## Multilateral Initiatives

# World Bank and the Global Fund: SENI-Plus Project

The SENI-Plus project, supported by the World Bank and the Global Financing Facility, serves as the operational vehicle for targeted free healthcare. Between October 2022 and May 2024, the project ensured that 475,000 women and children received essential services, and 101,000 were fully vaccinated. The project also funds 300 skilled health workers across 500 health centres to ensure clinical availability in rural zones.

### *The SENI-Plus Project: Financing and Scope*

The SENI-Plus project is a multi-sectoral initiative designed to transition CAR from emergency humanitarian aid toward a resilient primary healthcare system.

- Financing: The project is primarily funded by a $70 million to $95 million grant architecture, which includes $58 million from the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA), $12 million from the Global Financing Facility (GFF), and additional support from Swiss cooperation through a multidonor trust fund.
- Objectives: Its core mission is to increase the use of quality essential health services, particularly for pregnant women, lactating mothers, and children under five, especially in neglected rural areas.
- Workforce Expansion: Since its rollout in 2022, the project has enabled the recruitment and retention of 300 skilled health workers operating across more than 500 health centres and 15 district hospitals.

### *Operational Impact and Targeted Free Healthcare*

Between October 2022 and May 2024, the project achieved significant milestones in service delivery:

- Reach: Almost 475,000 women and children received essential health services through the programme.
- Immunisation: More than 101,000 children were fully vaccinated within the same period.
- Service Package: The "targeted" aspect of the free care includes prenatal consultations, assisted deliveries by skilled professionals, management of obstetric complications, and the provision of essential medicines.

### *Infrastructure and Last-Mile Logistics*

The SENI-Plus framework, supported by partners like UNICEF and the European Union, addresses the physical and logistical barriers that often render "free" care inaccessible:

- Clinical Modernisation: Facilities such as the Sibut District Hospital have been rehabilitated with new maternity wards, operating theatres, solar panels for uninterrupted power, and modern incubators for neonatal care.
- Supply Chain: To ensure medications are actually available, the project supports pharmaceutical warehouses and supply systems. UNICEF alone delivered over 12,500 tons of medical and nutritional supplies across seven key health districts in 2024.
- Transport Solutions: To overcome the "last-mile" barrier, 35 motorcycles and refrigerated moto-tricycles were supplied to secure the cold chain. Additionally, the ICRC finances motorcycle ambulance networks to transport women with complications over impassable roads.

### *Community Engagement and Behavioural Change*

A critical component of these initiatives is rebuilding trust in the formal health system:

- Mobile Outreach: Hospitals under the SENI-Plus umbrella often use mobile clinic teams (including medical assistants, midwives, and lab workers) to travel to peripheral villages on weekends to raise awareness and provide consultations.
- Traditional Midwives (Matrons): Because many women still give birth at home, the project trains traditional "matrons" to recognize obstetric danger signs and refer patients to health centres before complications become fatal.
- Impact: In areas where these strategies are active, such as Sibut, patient consultations have risen from under 1,000 to over 1,400 monthly, and there has been a notable reduction in home deliveries and recorded maternal deaths.

Despite these successes, challenges remain. Nearly 85% of health funding in CAR still flows "off-budget" through international partners, and extreme poverty means that even with free clinical services, families often struggle with the indirect costs of transport and basic household needs, which can still lead to delays in seeking life-saving care.

## African Network of Medical Excellence (ANME)

The African Network of Medical Excellence (ANME) is a significant regional multilateral effort involving the Ministries of Health of CAR and other participating nations, in cooperation with the international NGO *Emergency*. This initiative aims to establish high-quality "Centres of Excellence" across Africa to provide secondary and tertiary healthcare completely free of charge. CAR participates in these referral networks to ensure its population has access to specialised care in fields such as Paediatrics, Obstetrics, Gynaecology, and Tropical Diseases. The provisional financial requirement for this network is estimated at $250 million, with each participating state contributing 20% of the costs.

The African Network of Medical Excellence (ANME) is a regional multilateral initiative designed to strengthen specialised healthcare across the continent, including in the Central African Republic (CAR). It is a collaborative effort between the Ministries of Health of several African nations and the international NGO *Emergency*.

The core details of this initiative include:

- Primary Objective: The ANME seeks to establish high-quality "Centres of Excellence" across Africa. These centres are intended to provide secondary and tertiary healthcare that is completely free of charge at the point of delivery.
- Specialised Care for CAR: CAR participates in these referral networks to provide its population with access to specialised medical fields that are severely under-resourced within its own borders. These include Paediatrics, Obstetrics, Gynaecology, and Tropical Diseases.
- Financing Model: The provisional financial requirement for establishing this network is estimated at $250 million USD. The funding is structured as a partnership where each participating state is responsible for contributing 20% of the costs, with the remainder supported by partners like NGO *Emergency*.
- Strategic Importance: For a country like CAR, which has a massive shortage of specialists—notably having only about 15 gynaecologists for a population of six million—the ANME provides a critical pathway for patients to receive advanced surgical and clinical care that the primary health system cannot currently sustain.

By linking CAR to this regional network, the initiative aims to bridge the gap between basic primary care and the complex medical interventions required to further reduce maternal and child mortality rates.

## UNOPS and Infrastructural Recovery

The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) plays a critical role in the physical rehabilitation of the nation's overstretched health system. A key focus of their intervention has been the rehabilitation of the Bangui Paediatric Hospital's Neonatology unit, an essential facility for reducing neonatal mortality in the capital. This work is often coordinated alongside other partners like the World Bank and the French Development Agency (AFD) to improve rural connectivity and health facility accessibility. UNOPS' work is primarily focused on restoring specialised clinical units and improving the connectivity required to reach them.

### *Key UNOPS Projects and Partnerships*

According to the sources, UNOPS is an active partner in several high-impact recovery efforts:

- Bangui Paediatric Hospital Rehabilitation: A major focus for UNOPS has been the rehabilitation of the Neonatology unit at the Bangui Paediatric Hospital. This facility is essential for addressing CAR's high neonatal mortality rate—which stood at 30 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2024—by providing specialized care for newborns in the capital.
- PURIC Project and Rural Connectivity: UNOPS works alongside the World Bank and the French Development Agency (AFD) on the PURIC project. This initiative aims to improve rural connectivity, addressing a critical barrier where 13% of child deaths occur while families are actively travelling to a hospital due to impassable roads.
- Global Fund Implementation: UNOPS serves as a key delivery channel and implementation partner for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria within CAR, coordinating with the Ministry of Health and local Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to ensure medical supplies and infrastructure support reach their destinations.

### *Context of Infrastructural Recovery*

UNOPS's interventions are part of a wider effort to address the catastrophic state of CAR's health facilities:

- Systemic Damage: More than 50% of healthcare facilities in the country have been vandalised or looted during years of conflict. As of November 2025, only 48% of facilities are fully functioning, and approximately 31% remain partially damaged.
- National Targets (PNDS III): The government's PNDS III (2022–2026) framework sets an ambitious target to expand compliant clinical infrastructure from a baseline of 33% to 83% nationwide by 2026. This includes the installation of modern emergency services and oxygen production units.

## OCHA Humanitarian Fund

The Central African Republic Humanitarian Fund, managed by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), is a vital mechanism for advancing "localisation" in health delivery. In 2026, the fund pledged $10 million to channel direct financing to national and international NGOs, such as ALIMA, to operate primary healthcare clinics specifically within conflict zones and displacement camps.

Key details of the fund and its role in the health sector include:

### 1. Advancing Localisation

A primary strategic objective of the fund is the advancement of "localization." This involves channelling a significant portion of its resources directly to national and international Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and NGOs, such as ALIMA. By empowering local actors, the fund ensures that the response is grounded in community expertise and can be sustained even when international presence is limited.

### 2. Financial Commitments

In 2026, the fund pledged $10 million USD to support emergency interventions across CAR. As of the reporting period, $8.2 million USD of these pledges had already been paid, demonstrating the fund's role as a reliable and rapid source of liquidity in a context where nearly 85% of health funding flows "off-budget".

### 3. Health Sector Priorities

The fund priorities life-saving interventions in areas where the formal health system has collapsed or is non-existent due to conflict:

- Conflict Zones and Displacement Camps: It provides direct financing to operate primary healthcare clinics specifically within these high-risk areas.
- Vulnerable Populations: Funding is targeted toward populations in crisis, including the 1.1 million children and approximately 576,000 women of reproductive age who currently require humanitarian support.
- Integrated Care: The fund supports the integration of primary care services—such as maternal and child health—within displacement settings to mitigate the "triad" of child mortality (malaria, diarrhoea, and respiratory infections).

### 4. Strategic Context

The fund operates as part of the broader Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP). In 2025, the health sector required $26.4 million USD to reach a target of 666,000 people, but chronic underfunding and the suspension of major bilateral aid (such as US foreign assistance in early 2025) have made the OCHA Humanitarian Fund's localized approach even more vital for maintaining basic clinical coverage.

## Refugee-Specific Multilateral Responses

To address the health needs of refugees and returnees fleeing conflict, health sector partners operate under the Sudan Emergency Regional Response Plan 2025. This multilateral framework focuses on:

- Immediate life-saving interventions in border areas such as Vakaga.
- Building the long-term resilience of local health systems in host communities to manage the increased patient load.
- Providing targeted care at refugee sites like Korsi, where malaria accounts for 40% of all medical consultations.

Refugee-specific multilateral responses are primarily coordinated through regional frameworks designed to manage the health and protection needs of over 62,602 refugees and asylum seekers, the majority of whom have fled conflict in Sudan.

### *Sudan Emergency Regional Response Plan 2025*

The cornerstone of the current multilateral effort is the Sudan Emergency Regional Response Plan 2025. This framework coordinates health sector partners to address the influx of more than 54,000 Sudanese refugees and returnees who have arrived since April 2023. The plan has two strategic focuses:

- Immediate Life-Saving Care: Providing urgent clinical interventions at border entry points, such as Am Dafock in the Vakaga prefecture.
- Long-Term Resilience: Strengthening the capacity of local health systems in host communities to manage the increased patient load sustainably.

### *Sustainable Hosting and the Korsi Site*

To provide a more permanent solution than border-side camps, the CAR government and multilateral partners established a refugee hosting area at Korsi, located near Birao and 60 kilometres from the Sudanese border.

- Disease Burden: Health needs at Korsi are severe; as of early 2025, malaria was the leading cause of morbidity, accounting for 40% of all medical consultations at the site.
- Demographic Vulnerability: Between 84% and 86% of Sudanese refugees are women and children, who are at extreme risk of malnutrition and respiratory infections.

### *Multilateral Channelling of Bilateral Aid*

Multilateral organisations serve as the primary delivery channel for major bilateral donors who seek to mitigate risk in CAR's volatile environment.

- USAID Channelling: In the 2024 fiscal year, the United States obligated $120.5 million in aid, of which 67.5% ($81.3 million) was channelled through multilateral organisations like the United Nations. This funding is predominantly dedicated to humanitarian protection and displacement solutions.
- OCHA Humanitarian Fund: Managed by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, this fund pledged $10 million in 2026 to support localized responses. It channells direct financing to NGOs such as ALIMA to operate primary healthcare clinics within displacement camps and conflict zones.

### *Inclusion in Immunisation and Protection*

Multilateral projects specifically target the social exclusion of refugee groups to ensure they are included in national health targets:

- GESI Analysis: Gavi-supported projects utilize Gender Equity and Social Inclusion (GESI) analyses to identify specific barriers preventing Sudanese, Chadian, and Congolese refugees from accessing vaccines in urban centres like Bangui II and border districts like Bangassou.

- Protection Risks: Multilateral responses also address the high prevalence of gender-based violence (GBV) among displaced populations, where women and girls are often forced to travel long distances for water and firewood, increasing their exposure to violence. UNICEF and its partners registered 2,445 GBV cases in the first quarter of 2025 alone, highlighting the scale of the protection crisis within refugee and IDP communities.

## Gavi-Supported Civil Society Projects

While Gavi - the vaccine alliance - is a major provider of vaccines, it also funds specific multilateral projects implemented by civil society to reach "zero-dose" children.

- Zero Dose Zero Barrier Project: Implemented by World Vision with Gavi funding, this project partners with local organisations like *FAFECA* and *Wali ti 3ème*. It focuses on overcoming socio-cultural barriers to immunisation through community-led tracing and the creation of "men-only spaces" to engage fathers in childhood health decisions.
- Africa Frontline First Initiative: This is a collaborative financing mechanism involving the Financing Alliance for Health (FAH) that seeks to scale up and professionalise community health work across the continent, including in CAR.

To help increase immunisation coverage in lower-income countries, Gavi launched a series of opportunities for civil society organisations (CSOs) to deliver projects specifically designed to reach "zero-dose" children and under-immunised communities. In CAR, where 45% of children aged 12–23 months have never received a single vaccine, these projects are essential for bridging deep-seated immunologic gaps.

### *The "Zero Dose Zero Barrier" Project*

The primary Gavi-supported initiative identified in the sources is the "Zero Dose Zero Barrier" project, implemented by the global CSO World Vision. The project focuses on identifying and overcoming the socio-cultural, geographic, and gender-based obstacles that prevent families from accessing routine immunisation.

- Geographical Focus: The project operates in four health districts chosen to represent CAR's diverse social and security contexts: Carnot/Gadzi (mining areas), Mbaïki (marginalised Aka communities), Bangassou (insecure zones hosting Sudanese refugees), and Bangui II (high urban density).
- Management: The funding is managed through a consortium led by MannionDaniels and Oxford Policy Management (OPM), which provides end-to-end fund management for Gavi's CSO-led projects.

### *Partnerships with Local CSOs*

A key feature of Gavi's approach is the integration of local community expertise. World Vision partners with local CAR organisations, including:

- Wali ti 3ème (Women of the 3rd Arrondissement): A grassroots group that conducts community-led tracing to identify unreached children.
- FAFECA: Another local CSO partner that assists in community mobilisation and identifying vulnerable households.

### *Core Strategies and Gender Integration*

The project utilizes Gender Equity and Social Inclusion (GESI) analysis to understand why vaccination rates remain low. This analysis revealed that while mothers are often the ones who wish to vaccinate their children, fathers or in-laws typically hold the decision-making power and may forbid vaccination due to mistrust or misinformation.

- Men-Only Spaces: To address this, the project established dedicated safe spaces for men to discuss their misgivings. These sessions allow fathers to ask questions about vaccine side effects (such as fever and vomiting) and complain about the poor reception their wives sometimes receive at health centres.
- Transforming Skeptics into Advocates: By providing reliable information in a non-judgmental environment, the project has transformed formerly skeptical fathers into outspoken advocates who now educate other men in their communities.
- Community-Led Tracing: Local members of *Wali ti 3ème* work within their own neighbourhoods to identify families who have missed doses and encourage them to attend mobile or proximity clinics.

***Measurable Results***

The community-centred approach of the Gavi-supported CSO projects has led to significant recovery of unreached children:

- Initial Identification: In September 2025, early community mobilisation efforts identified an initial 106 zero-dose children.
- Scaling Success: By December 2025, the combined efforts of World Vision and local CSOs like *Wali ti 3ème* had successfully reached and vaccinated 858 previously unreached children across the targeted districts.

These projects demonstrate that structured listening and community-led dialogue are decisive levers for reducing barriers to vaccination in CAR's complex humanitarian environment.

## WHO Country Cooperation Strategy

The World Health Organisation (WHO) operates a comprehensive Country Cooperation Strategic Agenda which, while providing technical guidance to the government, also coordinates with other partners on the "Reaching Every District" (RED) strategy. This strategy is designed to achieve better coverage of immunisation services by decentralising financial and sociocultural health services to the district level.

The strategy's core pillars include:

### 1. Reducing the Burden of Communicable Diseases

This priority focuses on expanding national programs for major infectious pathogens:

- HIV and Hepatitis: Support for universal access to HIV care, including national strategic plans for testing and prevention.
- Tuberculosis: Intensifying the "Stop TB" campaign with a focus on vulnerable populations and strengthening surveillance systems.
- Malaria: Implementing national strategies to prevent and eliminate malaria, utilizing strategic information for targeted interventions.
- Vaccine-Preventable Diseases: A key component is the "Reaching Every District" (RED) strategy, designed to improve immunisation coverage nationwide.
- Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs): Support for mass chemotherapy and integrated plans to control or eradicate endemic NTDs.

### 2. Addressing Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs)

The strategy acknowledges the growing impact of NCDs, which accounted for 32% of deaths in 2019:

- NCD Policy and Plans: Support for research, specific expertise, and monitoring health trends to control diseases like heart disease, cancer, and diabetes.

- Mental Health and Addiction: Development of diagnostic systems to address mental health issues and substance addiction stemming from years of conflict.
- Nutrition: Implementing a national plan focused on the surveillance and medical treatment of nutritional complications.

### 3. Mother and Child Health

Given that CAR has some of the world's highest mortality rates—where 9% of children died before age five in 2024—this is a critical priority:

- Avoidable Deaths: Strategic plans focus on providing enlarged access to high-quality reproductive, maternal, newborn, and child health services.
- Health Equity: Efforts to improve health equity by addressing the social determinants of health and environmental risks.

### 4. Health System Strengthening and Policy Reform

WHO provides technical assistance to transition the system from emergency relief to permanent primary healthcare:

- National Health Policies: Support for the decentralisation of health services to improve geographical access and organize the restoration of infrastructure.
- Human Resources: Improving staff training, specifically through the Health Sciences Faculty, and creating better distribution and retention strategies for health workers.
- Access to Medicines: Establishing reliable structures for the supply of essential medications and strengthening the national regulatory authority.
- Health Information Systems: Reactivating systems to gather and analyse evidence-based data to facilitate national decision-making.

### 5. Epidemic Preparedness and Emergency Response

CAR's location in the "meningitis belt" and its proximity to Ebola-endemic regions make preparedness essential:

- International Health Regulations (IHR): Support for information management to detect and coordinate responses to public health emergencies in accordance with the IHR 2005.
- Surveillance Systems: Strengthening the Integrated Disease Surveillance and Response (IDSR) system for epidemic-prone diseases.
- Polio Eradication: Technical assistance to interrupt the transmission of poliomyelitis and achieve necessary immunity thresholds.
- Crisis Management: Managing health risks associated with disasters and improving overall hospital safety during emergencies.

The strategy serves as a bridge between the Government of CAR and international partners, aiming to move the country towards Universal Health Coverage through coordinated technical assistance.

## International Initiatives Worth Considering

## World Health Organization (WHO)

The WHO provides:

- Technical guidance
- Disease surveillance
- Vaccine policy recommendations
- Health systems strengthening

Its Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) remains foundational to national vaccination systems.

## UNICEF

UNICEF is the world's largest vaccine procurement and distribution organisation.

Key roles:

- Vaccine delivery
- Cold-chain support
- Community health programmes
- Maternal and child health services

## Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance

Gavi is arguably the most influential vaccine-focused aid programme.

It helps low-income countries:

- Purchase vaccines at subsidised prices
- Strengthen immunisation systems
- Introduce new vaccines

Since 2000, Gavi-supported programmes have vaccinated hundreds of millions of children across the developing world.

## President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief

PEPFAR is one of the largest disease-focused aid programmes ever created.

Achievements include:

- HIV testing
- Antiretroviral treatment
- Prevention of mother-to-child transmission

It has been particularly important in eastern and southern Africa.

## The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria

The Global Fund finances:

- HIV treatment
- TB control
- Malaria prevention

Interventions include:

- Antiretroviral therap
- Insecticide-treated bed nets
- Diagnostic testing
- Community health worker networks

## World Bank

The World Bank funds:

- Health infrastructure
- Rural clinics
- Health workforce development
- Universal health coverage reforms

Its financing often supports long-term health system strengthening rather than disease-specific programmes.

## Initiatives

## Rwanda: Community Health Workers and Vaccine Delivery

### *Gavi-Supported Expanded Immunisation Programme*

Supported by:

- Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance
- UNICEF
- World Health Organization

Through this, Rwanda rapidly introduced pneumococcal, rotavirus and HPV vaccines. The country also became one of the first in Africa to achieve very high HPV vaccination rates among adolescent girls.

### *Community Health Worker Programme*

Over 50,000 community health workers were deployed to villages nationwide.

Responsibilities include:

- Monitoring child growth
- Identifying malnutrition
- Conducting health education
- Referring sick children
- Supporting vaccination campaigns

As a result of these efforts, between 2000 and 2020:

- Under-five mortality fell dramatically.
- Vaccine coverage consistently exceeded many wealthier countries.
- Large reductions occurred in deaths from pneumonia and diarrhoeal disease.

## Ethiopia: Health Extension Programme

Ethiopia has developed one of the largest rural health outreach systems in the world through its **Health Extension Programme (HEP) l**aunched in 2003. Supported by the World Bank, United States Agency for International Development, UNICEF, and Gavi.

Key features include:

- Female health extension workers stationed in rural communities.
- Standardised health posts across villages.
- Focus on preventive rather than hospital-based care.

Services:

- Childhood immunisation
- Maternal health
- Family planning
- Hygiene education
- Malaria prevention

The programme expanded healthcare access to tens of millions of rural resident, leading to:

- Increased immunisation rates.
- Significant declines in child mortality.
- Improved antenatal care.
- Greater access to treatment for childhood illnesses.

## Bangladesh: Integrated Community Health

### *Expanded Programme on Immunization*

Supported by:

- UNICEF
- World Health Organization
- Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance

Bangladesh developed extensive village-level outreach systems.

### *NGO Partnerships*

Large NGOs such as BRAC played major roles.

Activities included:

- Household visits
- Maternal education
- Oral rehydration therapy promotion
- Vaccination awareness

As a result the country achieved:

- High childhood vaccination rates.
- Major reductions in measles mortality.

- Significant declines in under-five mortality.

## Nigeria: Polio Eradication Campaign

Nigeria provides an example of a disease-specific intervention through its implementation of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative led by:

- World Health Organization
- UNICEF
- Rotary International
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Challenges included:

- Insecurity in northern states.
- Vaccine misinformation.
- Difficult terrain.

Strategies included:

- Door-to-door vaccination.
- Religious leader engagement.
- Mobile vaccination teams.
- GPS tracking of campaign coverage.

Nigeria was once the global epicentre of wild poliovirus transmission. After years of intensive effort, transmission of wild poliovirus was interrupted, representing one of the largest public-health campaigns in modern African history.

## Malawi: Child Survival and Integrated Management

Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI)

Supported by:

- World Health Organization
- UNICEF

Health workers are trained to assess multiple conditions simultaneously rather than treating diseases individually. Children presenting with symptoms are screened for:

- Malnutrition
- Pneumonia
- Malaria
- Diarrhoea

The programme helped reduce mortality through earlier diagnosis and treatment, particularly in rural districts.

## Tanzania: Malaria and Vaccination Integration

Tanzania has implemented several integrated programmes linking vaccination with malaria prevention, such as the Bed-Net Distribution Through Child Health Service.

Supported by:

- The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria
- President's Malaria Initiative

Families receiving child-health services also receive:

- Insecticide-treated bed nets
- Malaria education
- Vaccination services

## Government Programmes

CAR's Ministry of Health and Population is leading a transition from emergency humanitarian relief to sustainable health system strengthening through integrated strategic frameworks.

## The PNDS III Framework (2022-2026)

The third-generation National Health Development Plan (PNDS III) is the primary roadmap for health recovery. Carrying a total budget requirement of 2.97 billion USD (approximately 1.63 trillion FCFA), its core objectives include:

- Raising International Health Regulations (IHR) compliance from 24% to 60%.
- Ensuring 83% of facilities meet clinical and infrastructural standards.
- Utilising a hybrid financing model integrating the state budget, donor grants, household participation, and the *Bons de Prestation de Financement* (BPF) mechanism, which currently covers 40% of the population.

### *Strategic Objectives*

The PNDS III focuses on four primary areas to stabilise the national health ecosystem:

- Quality and Patient Safety: A central pillar is improving the clinical quality of services, specifically increasing the availability and affordability of essential medications and integrating patient safety concepts across all levels of care.
- Epidemic Preparedness: The plan aims to raise the country's compliance with International Health Regulations (IHR 2005) from a baseline of 24% to 60% by 2026, focusing on real-time disease surveillance and risk management.
- Human Resource Densification: It sets a target to ensure 70% of health facilities are staffed with qualified, motivated, and ethical personnel. This includes operational plans for career development and better distribution of workers to rural areas.
- Infrastructural Modernisation: The framework seeks to expand compliant clinical infrastructure from 33% to 83% nationwide, including the installation of oxygen production units and modern emergency services.

### *Finance*

The plan utilises a hybrid financing structure to sustain its ambitious goals:

- State and Partner Budgets: Funding is drawn from the public budget, bolstered by major multilateral grants such as the World Bank's $70 million SENI-Plus project.
- Cost Recovery and Household Participation: The framework continues to use household contributions through cost-recovery mechanisms for certain services.

- Bons de Prestation de Financement (BPF): This specific mechanism is designed to provide health coverage for approximately 40% of the Central African population.
- Health Resource Tracking (HRT): To address the fact that 85% of health funding flows "off-budget", a digital tracking system is being institutionalised to map these financial flows for better policy alignment.

### *Institutional Responsibilities*

The PNDS III promotes a "whole-of-government" approach, involving multiple ministries beyond the Ministry of Health and Population:

- Ministry of Gender and Protection: Responsible for integrating family health promotion and supporting vulnerable households against socio-economic barriers.
- Ministry of Mines and Geology: Tasked with supporting healthcare and vaccination activities specifically within mining zones.
- Ministry of Humanitarian Action: Coordinates the delivery of healthcare in crisis-affected areas to ensure continuity of care.

### *Monitoring and Evaluation*

The framework establishes a rigorous reporting cadence to ensure accountability:

- Data Reporting: Includes monthly reports at the facility level, quarterly district reviews, and annual national consolidations.
- Sociocultural Integration: The plan explicitly acknowledges CAR's linguistic diversity (French, Sango, and 80 ethnic languages) and incorporates strategies to address harmful traditional practices, such as early marriage (23.6%) and female genital mutilation (21.6%), which directly impact maternal and child health outcomes.
- Performance Targets: Key indicators include increasing the rapid epidemic response rate from 79% to 100% and ensuring 80% of community care sites are fully operational by 2026

## Universal Health Coverage: The AMU Scheme

To protect vulnerable populations from catastrophic health expenditure, the government is co-developing the Assurance Maladie Universelle (AMU). This national health insurance scheme is designed to provide financial risk protection for 2.4 million people, representing approximately 37% of the total population.

*Key details of the scheme include:*

- Objective and Target Population: The primary goal of the AMU is to provide financial risk protection to the country's most vulnerable citizens. A drafted concept note for the scheme aims to cover 2.4 million people, which represents approximately 37% of the total population of the Central African Republic.
- Strategic Transition: The scheme is designed to help CAR transition from a fragmented, donor-dependent health system to a sustainable, universal framework. This is critical because approximately 85% of health funding in CAR currently flows "off-budget" through international NGOs and multilateral organisations.
- Health Outcomes: By providing financial protection, the AMU is expected to increase the use of essential health services, particularly for pregnant women and children, thereby helping to reduce the nation's high maternal and child mortality rates.
- Systemic Support: To facilitate the implementation of the AMU, the government is institutionalising a digital Health Resource Tracking (HRT) system. This system is intended to capture and map the significant off-budget financial flows to ensure better policy alignment and strategic resource allocation.
- Universal Health Coverage (UHC): The development of the AMU is a central component of the CAR government's broader strategic push toward achieving Universal Health Coverage.

While the AMU represents a major step toward long-term fiscal sustainability, it operates alongside other national initiatives like the PNDS III roadmap and the SENI-Plus project, which currently provides targeted free healthcare to women and children through direct grants.

## Community-Based Interventions and Midwifery

To mitigate out-of-facility mortality, the government has deployed 1,200 active community midwives across 32 districts. In regions where these midwives operate, there has been a 30% reduction in home deliveries. This is complemented by matron training programmes designed to monitor pregnancies and recognise obstetric danger signs. These initiatives focus on bridging the gap between formal clinical facilities and isolated rural populations through task-shifting, community trust-building, and logistical innovation.

### *Community Midwifery and the Role of "Matrons"*

Midwifery in CAR has evolved into a hybrid model that integrates state-registered professionals with trained community actors to ensure "last-mile" coverage.

- Deployment and Reach: There are currently over 1,200 active community midwives operating across 32 of the country's 35 health districts. These midwives serve as a vital link, accompanying pregnant women from their first antenatal consultation through to delivery and postnatal follow-up. In regions where they are active, there has been a recorded 30% decrease in home deliveries.
- Integrating Traditional Birth Attendants (Matrons): To address the fact that nearly half of women still give birth at home, the government and partners like the ICRC train traditional "matrons".
- These women are taught to recognise obstetric danger signs and refer patients to health centres before complications become fatal.
- In the Nana Gribizi prefecture, training specifically enables these matrons to identify risks early and, in extreme cases where a health centre is unreachable, perform safe deliveries.
- Professional Attendance: Despite these efforts, a massive shortage remains, with only about 15 gynaecologists serving a population of six million. This makes the role of the 300 skilled clinical workers recruited under the SENI-Plus project and the over 1,200 community midwives essential for institutional survival.

### *Community-Led Health Interventions*

Programmes such as the "Zero Dose Zero Barrier" project and mobile outreach strategies target the deep-seated socio-cultural and physical barriers to care.

- Engaging Fathers: A Gender Equity and Social Inclusion (GESI) analysis revealed that childhood healthcare decisions are heavily dominated by fathers, whose mistrust or busy agricultural schedules often prevent vaccination.
- The "Zero Dose Zero Barrier" project established men-only spaces where fathers could discuss their misgivings with trained facilitators.
- This approach transformed sceptical fathers into active advocates; by December 2025, identifying these barriers helped teams reach 858 previously unreached "zero-dose" children.
- Local Civil Society Organisations (CSOs): The Ministry of Health partners with local groups like *Wali ti 3ème* (Women of the 3rd Arrondissement) and *FAFECA* to identify vulnerable households and mobilise communities for vaccination drives.
- Mobile Outreach Clinics: Hospitals, such as the Sibut District Hospital, utilise weekend mobile teams comprising a medical assistant, a midwife, and laboratory workers. These teams travel to peripheral villages, often holding consultations in the homes of village chiefs to build local trust and increase service uptake.

### *Logistics and Last-Mile Delivery*

Physical barriers, such as impassable roads and a lack of transport, cause 13% of child deaths to occur while families are actively travelling to a hospital.

- Motorcycle Ambulances: To mitigate these risks, the ICRC finances motorcycle ambulance networks designed to navigate difficult terrain and transport women with obstetric complications to surgical centres.
- Infrastructural Support: International partners have prioritised repairing bridges and routes (such as the Bianga–Sabegoudé route) to help an estimated 20,000 people reach health centres more easily.
- Task-Shifting to Community Health Workers (CHWs): Building on the success of the COVID-19 vaccination drive, which tripled coverage in six months, CAR is working to formalise the integration of state-salaried CHWs into the permanent health workforce. These workers are trained to bundle services, combining routine childhood antigens with other essential screenings to maximise the impact of every community visit.

## Immunisation Recovery and New Antigens

The "Big Catch-Up" campaign utilises mobile "proximity campaigns" to reach isolated zones. A major milestone was the introduction of the malaria vaccine in August 2024, expanding the national schedule to 13 antigens, compared to only 6 antigens in 1984. These efforts are designed to bridge a massive "immunologic gap," where only 16% of children aged 12–23 months have received all basic vaccines and 45% of toddlers in that same age group have never been vaccinated (the "zero-dose" challenge).

### *Immunisation Recovery*

To address these critical gaps, the CAR government, in partnership with Gavi, WHO, and UNICEF, launched "The Big Catch-Up" campaign. This initiative focuses on community-centered recovery through several key strategies:

- Targeted Zero-Dose Recovery: The Ministry of Health partners with local civil society organisations (CSOs), such as *Wali ti 3ème* (Women of the 3rd Arrondissement), to conduct community-led tracing. These efforts have successfully identified and vaccinated hundreds of previously unreached children in districts like Carnot, Mbaïki, and Bangassou.
- Proximity Campaigns (Campagnes de Proximité): Recognising that distance is a major barrier, mobile clinical teams travel directly to remote, conflict-affected, and isolated zones to deliver vaccines.
- Men-Only Spaces: Based on Gender Equity and Social Inclusion (GESI) analysis, which found that fathers typically make household healthcare decisions, the "Zero Dose Zero Barrier" project created dedicated safe spaces for men to discuss their mistrust of vaccines. This approach has transformed skeptical fathers into active advocates for their children's immunisation.
- Task Shifting: Drawing on lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic—where national coverage tripled in six months—the government is integrating state-salaried Community Health Workers (CHWs) into the permanent workforce to bundle routine childhood antigens with other screenings.

### *Introduction of New Antigens*

The national immunisation schedule has expanded significantly, growing from providing 6 antigens in 1984 to 13 in 2024.

- The Malaria Vaccine Milestone: In August 2024, CAR reached a major milestone by introducing the malaria vaccine into its routine Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI). Following the reception of R21/Matrix-M vaccines in May 2024, the routine program began targeting nearly 200,000 children. By mid-2025, these efforts were active even in hard-to-reach districts like Batangafo.

- Bundling Antigens: To maximise the impact of every clinical encounter, the Ministry of Health uses a strategy of "bundling" where new or recovery vaccines (such as for COVID-19 or polio) are administered alongside routine childhood antigens.
- Logistical Support: To sustain these new antigens, particularly those requiring strict temperature control, partners like UNICEF and the European Union have supplied refrigerated moto-tricycles and motorcycles to secure the "last-mile" clinical cold chain.

Despite these advances, the system remains fragile due to 85% of health funding flowing "off-budget" and ongoing security risks that sometimes result in violence against vaccination teams. To ensure long-term sustainability, the government is working to formalise community-led models into the permanent national health framework.

## Health Resource Tracking

A critical challenge remains the fact that 85% of health funding flows "off-budget". To address this fragmentation, the government has institutionalised a digital Health Resource Tracking (HRT) system to map these financial flows and enable more effective resource allocation.

The necessity and function of the HRT system are defined by several key factors:

### 1. Addressing "Off-Budget" Funding

The primary driver for the HRT system is the structural reality that approximately 85% of health funding in CAR flows "off-budget". These funds are typically managed directly by international NGOs and multilateral organisations rather than passing through the national treasury. Without a tracking system, the government has limited visibility into how or where these vast sums are spent, leading to fragmented services and potential duplication of efforts.

### 2. Strategic Purpose and Objectives

The HRT system serves as the technical backbone for several national reforms:

- Resource Allocation: By providing real-time insight into financial flows, the digital system enables the Ministry of Health to allocate resources more efficiently based on actual needs rather than donor preferences alone.
- Policy Alignment: The system ensures that off-budget spending is aligned with national priorities, such as the PNDS III (2022–2026) roadmap and the push toward Universal Health Coverage (UHC).
- Fiscal Sustainability: Capturing these financial flows is viewed as a prerequisite for transitioning CAR from a donor-dependent, fragmented system to a sustainable, sovereign budgetary framework.

### 3. Integration and Framework

The HRT system is not a standalone tool but is integrated into the country's broader planning mechanisms:

- Procedure Manuals: The FAH assisted in developing an operational planning manual that embeds the "One Plan, One Budget, One Report" approach. The HRT provides the data necessary to make this "One Budget" a reality by including both state and partner contributions.
- Universal Health Coverage: The HRT is instrumental in the design and eventual implementation of the Assurance Maladie Universelle (AMU) national insurance scheme, as it helps identify available resources that can be leveraged to protect vulnerable populations.

### 4. Current Status and Recommendations

While the digital HRT system has been successfully designed and institutionalised at the central level, current policy recommendations emphasize the need to fully scale the system across all health districts. This expansion is considered essential to ensure that resource tracking reaches rural and conflict-affected areas, where the majority of "off-budget" humanitarian health interventions take place.

## Recommendations

### 1. Governance and Financial Sustainability

- Scale the Health Resource Tracking (HRT) System: The government should prioritise scaling the digital HRT system across all 35 health districts. Currently, nearly 85% of health funding flows "off-budget" through international partners. Capturing these flows is a prerequisite for the government to transition from donor dependency to a sovereign national budgetary framework.
- Accelerate the Universal Health Insurance (AMU) Scheme: Finalising and implementing the Assurance Maladie Universelle (AMU) is essential to provide financial risk protection to the 2.4 million most vulnerable citizens. This will help ensure that "free" healthcare becomes a reality by removing the indirect financial barriers that currently force families to weigh medical care against survival.

### 2. Workforce and Community Integration

- Formalise Community Health Workers (CHWs): Building on the success of "The Big Catch-Up" campaign, the Ministry of Health should formalise the integration of state-salaried CHWs into the permanent national workforce. These workers are critical for bundling routine childhood antigens with other screenings, maximizing the impact of every community visit.
- Bridge the Gap with Traditional Midwives ("Matrons"): Given that nearly half of women still give birth at home, programs like the ICRC's training for traditional "matrons" should be expanded nationwide. Training these actors to recognise obstetric danger signs and perform early referrals serves as a vital bridge between traditional practices and the formal clinical system.

### 3. Overcoming Physical and Logistical Barriers

- Scale Motorcycle Ambulance Networks: Physical distance remains a primary killer, with 13% of child deaths occurring during travel to a hospital. Replicating the ICRC's motorcycle ambulance model in all rural districts can provide a low-cost, rugged solution for transporting emergency obstetric and pediatric cases over impassable roads.
- Prioritise Rural Connectivity: Collaborative projects like PURIC (involving the World Bank, AFD, and UNOPS) must continue to focus on repairing bridges and access routes to open up isolated areas for health outreach.

### 4. Clinical Strategy and Specialised Care

- Adopt "Radical Simplification" and Integration: To mitigate global financing shortfalls, the Ministry of Health should leverage the Global Fund's move toward "radical simplification". This involves pooling disease-specific resources to fund integrated primary healthcare platforms that combine malaria, TB, and HIV services with routine maternal and child health packages.
- Leverage Regional Networks for Specialty Care: With only 15 gynaecologists for six million people, CAR should deepen its participation in the African Network of Medical Excellence (ANME). This allows for the referral of complex cases to regional "Centres of Excellence," providing free specialised care that the domestic system cannot yet sustain.

## 5. Addressing Socio-Cultural Barriers

- Expand "Men-Only" Health Advocacy Spaces: Because fathers often hold the decision-making power regarding a child's immunisation, the "Zero Dose Zero Barrier" model of men-only dialogue spaces should be standard practice in all health districts. Transforming sceptical fathers into health advocates has already proven successful in reaching hundreds of previously unreached children.
- Improve the "Clerical Welcome": Addressing "harsh treatment" from clinic administrative staff, which often discourages mothers from returning for follow-up vaccine doses, should be integrated into the PNDS III quality improvement protocols.

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC · BANGUI DECLARATION ON JOINT ACTIONS

SECTION 5 OF 7

# MSME Development

Micro, small, and medium enterprises occupy a central place in the development prospects of rural economies across the developing world. They are often the first point of entry into income generation for households, the main source of non-farm employment, and a practical mechanism through which agricultural production can be transformed into local value. Yet in many rural settings, MSME development is defined by a persistent barrier: economies are crowded with informal household businesses and very small traders, while scalable small and medium firms struggle to emerge. This pattern is especially relevant to the CAR, where enterprise development is closely tied to food security, youth employment, territorial stabilisation, and the wider recovery of the state after years of conflict and institutional fragility.

In rural developing contexts, the obstacles facing MSMEs are rarely only financial. Lack of credit is often the most visible constraint, but it interacts with poor infrastructure, weak market access, limited skills, informality, gender inequality, climate shocks, and insecurity. Rural entrepreneurs may have promising commercial ideas, but they often lack collateral, reliable electricity, safe transport routes, storage facilities, business records, and access to buyers beyond their immediate locality. The result is a growth ceiling: enterprises remain small, informal, and vulnerable, even when they operate in sectors with clear development potential such as agribusiness, food processing, forestry, repair services, local construction, and retail trade.

These general constraints are intensified in CAR by the country's particular political economy. MSMEs constitute the overwhelming majority of formal entrepreneurial activity and are concentrated in sectors that matter directly for livelihoods: agribusiness, forestry, mining, services, construction, and small-scale trade. Under CAR's Code des PME-PMI (the legal framework for small and medium enterprises and industries in the country), MSMEs are defined by an investment ceiling of 1 billion FCFA and a permanent workforce of no more than 99 employees, with categories ranging from very small enterprises to medium-sized firms. This legal classification is important because it provides the basis for targeted public support, including promotional loans, customs reductions, procurement opportunities, employment incentives, and access to specialised support institutions.

However, the existence of a legal framework does not by itself overcome the market failures that constrain enterprise growth. CAR's financial sector remains shallow, and the gap between commercial-bank requirements and the realities of rural business is wide. Entrepreneurs frequently lack formal accounts, land titles, credit histories, and bankable business plans. Lenders, in turn, view MSMEs as high-risk borrowers, particularly outside Bangui and in areas affected by insecurity. Even where microfinance is available, loan sizes may be too small, interest rates too high, and repayment schedules poorly aligned with agricultural cycles. As a result, finance often helps households smooth consumption rather than enabling firms to invest in equipment, storage, processing capacity, or market expansion.

Market access is another binding constraint. Rural producers and small firms face long distances to urban centres, high transport costs, unreliable feeder roads, limited cold-chain infrastructure, and weak links to formal buyers. This is particularly damaging in agriculture-linked sectors, where seasonal gluts can drive prices down and where the lack of processing capacity prevents producers from capturing more value. When businesses cannot store, transform, or transport goods efficiently, they are forced to sell at low farmgate prices. Weak electricity access compounds the problem by raising operating costs and limiting productive activities such as milling, refrigeration, welding, digital services, and agro-processing. In CAR, where electricity

access remains very limited and supply shortages affect even urban centres, the infrastructure constraint is not peripheral; it is central to the viability of MSMEs.

Food security provides the clearest illustration of why MSME development is not simply a private-sector issue. CAR's food-security challenges are rooted in low agricultural productivity, conflict-related displacement, limited rural services, weak logistics, and household vulnerability to shocks. When farmers cannot access seed, tools, finance, roads, storage, or buyers, food availability and household incomes both suffer. When small traders and processors cannot operate reliably, local markets become thinner and more volatile. MSMEs therefore sit at the intersection of food systems and economic resilience: they can connect producers to markets, reduce post-harvest losses, create rural jobs, support local input supply, and improve the availability of processed foods. Conversely, when MSMEs remain underdeveloped, food-security interventions risk remaining short-term and humanitarian rather than becoming engines of durable recovery.

The social dimension is equally important. Youth underemployment, internal displacement, and gender inequality shape both the supply of entrepreneurs and the demand for enterprise support. Young people may have energy and commercial ambition but lack technical skills, start-up capital, and professional networks. Women often dominate microenterprise activity yet face additional barriers related to land rights, mobility, unpaid care responsibilities, and access to formal training or finance. In fragile areas, insecurity can disrupt supply chains, displace customers and workers, raise transaction costs, and expose businesses to informal taxation or extortion. Climate shocks add further pressure, especially for agriculture and livestock-linked enterprises. For these reasons, MSME policy in CAR cannot be separated from stabilisation, social inclusion, and territorial development.

Against this backdrop, CAR's government has sought to frame private-sector development as part of a broader reform agenda. The National Development Plan 2024–2028 positions economic diversification, structural transformation, territorial investment, and reduced fragility as strategic priorities. The Casablanca International Investors Roundtable, presented as a major financing milestone, is significant because it links investment mobilisation to the practical question of how CAR can rebuild productive capacity beyond emergency assistance. For MSMEs, the promise of such an agenda is that reforms and financing can move beyond isolated projects toward a more coordinated ecosystem: legal recognition, administrative simplification, access to finance, infrastructure, digital governance, training, and market integration.

The Code des PME-PMI is one of the main instruments through which this ecosystem is being formalised. By defining enterprise categories and establishing eligibility for benefits, the code attempts to make MSME support more predictable. Its provisions on promotional loans, customs reductions, public procurement quotas, and employment subsidies respond directly to the problems that prevent firms from moving from survival activity to growth. The challenge, however, is implementation. Benefits must be accessible to firms outside the capital, understandable to entrepreneurs with limited administrative capacity, and connected to practical support such as bookkeeping, tax registration, compliance advice, and business-plan preparation.

This is where institutions such as CAPMEA, CTS/PME-PMI, and GUFE-RCA become important. CAPMEA's role in business-plan preparation, technical training, restructuring support, formalisation assistance, and links to finance addresses one of the central weaknesses of CAR's enterprise base: many entrepreneurs are not yet equipped to present themselves to banks, investors, suppliers, or public procurement systems. GUFE-RCA, a hub for business registration and legal formalities, tackles the informality problem from another angle. Its "company in 48 hours" model, the registration of more than 14,645 enterprises, and the launch of a decentralised branch in Bambari are all attempts to reduce the cost and complexity of formalisation. If such services can be deepened beyond Bangui, they could help rural firms access legal identity, contracts, finance, and public support.

Digitalisation also matters because weak public administration can itself become a barrier to enterprise development. The Dûnîa digital platform, developed for the Ministry of Economy, Planning and International

Cooperation, is presented as a tool for digitising ministry operations, tracking development finance, supporting macroeconomic analysis, and improving transparency. Reported reductions in administrative processing times and recurring costs suggest that digital governance can improve coordination and reduce duplication across projects. For MSME development, this matters because entrepreneurs and support institutions need a state that can identify priorities, manage investment flows, monitor programmes, and align donor-backed interventions with national objectives.

Alongside national reforms, bilateral and multilateral development partners are supporting schemes that address the same structural barriers from different angles. World Bank support is especially relevant to the productive foundations of MSME growth. Projects focused on agricultural productivity and agribusiness MSMEs, such as PRADAC, aim to strengthen the link between farming and enterprise. Energy initiatives such as PURACEL and PASEEL respond to the electricity constraint, while transport and connectivity programmes such as PURIC and PRACAC seek to lower the cost of moving goods and people. These are not merely infrastructure projects in a narrow sense: roads, river transport, and energy access determine whether small firms can scale production, reach buyers, preserve goods, and compete beyond local markets.

The African Development Bank's support similarly reflects the connection between infrastructure, finance, and formalisation. Investments in regional transport corridors, reconstruction, governance, and portfolio management aim to create a more enabling environment for private activity. The GUFE business registration hub in Bambari is particularly important because it extends formalisation services outside the capital, where rural entrepreneurs are least likely to navigate administrative procedures. The AfDB-backed trade guarantee with Ecobank also speaks directly to the finance constraint, helping reduce risk in trade-related transactions and potentially easing access to working capital for firms involved in import, export, or supply-chain activities.

Other initiatives focus more explicitly on market readiness and regional integration. Cooperation involving the Economic Commission for Africa and DANIDA seeks to prepare CAR's SMEs for the African Continental Free Trade Area by supporting bankable business plans, trade standards, financial readiness, and regional value-chain integration. This is important because MSME development cannot be sustained if firms remain trapped in thin local markets. Regional trade integration offers opportunities for scale, but only for enterprises that can meet standards, manage costs, demonstrate reliability, and access finance. In this sense, trade-readiness support complements domestic formalisation and infrastructure investment.

Skills and youth-focused programmes address another core weakness in the MSME ecosystem. UNDP and UNIDO initiatives, including youth agribusiness, the Projet Diaspora, the Opportunities for Youth in Africa programme, Songhaï Centre agro-pastoral training, and digital resilience or cybersecurity bootcamps, are designed to equip young people with practical capabilities and pathways into self-employment. The Initiative Pour l'Autonomisation de la Jeunesse, launched in March 2024 and running until December 2027, follows the same logic. By combining pre-training, vocational training, self-employment support, and entrepreneurship development, it seeks to improve socio-professional integration for vulnerable young women and men, especially in Bangui and surrounding areas.

The gender dimension of these programmes is particularly significant. IPAJ's emphasis on encouraging women to enter higher-earning, traditionally male-dominated sectors such as construction and public works responds to the fact that women are often concentrated in lower-margin informal activities. If training is paired with childcare-sensitive delivery, start-up support, mentoring, and access to markets, it can help women-owned enterprises move beyond subsistence trading and into more productive value chains. Similarly, German-funded programmes implemented by Welthungerhilfe and supported by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development use vocational training, agricultural skills, business starter kits, and private-sector development as tools for post-conflict stabilisation and social cohesion. Their focus on unemployed youth, internally displaced people, women, and young adults reflects the reality that enterprise development in CAR is also a peacebuilding intervention.

The European Union's involvement through the Global Gateway strategy adds a broader layer of support across infrastructure, digital connectivity, economic governance, agribusiness, forestry, education, youth services, and peace and security. These areas may appear diverse, but they are linked by the conditions needed for MSMEs to function. Digital infrastructure can reduce isolation and improve access to information. Tax and customs reform can lower compliance burdens and make trade more predictable. Education and youth centres can strengthen employability and entrepreneurship. Peace and justice initiatives can help restore confidence in institutions and reduce the insecurity that deters investment.

Taken together, these government, bilateral, and multilateral schemes show that the central challenge is not the absence of initiatives, but the need for coherence among them. The barriers facing MSMEs in CAR are mutually reinforcing: weak roads limit market access; weak market access reduces profitability; low profitability reduces creditworthiness; lack of credit prevents investment in equipment; low skills weaken business performance; informality excludes firms from finance and procurement; insecurity and displacement reduce demand; and food insecurity undermines household resilience. Effective MSME development therefore requires layered intervention. Legal reform must be matched by decentralised administrative services. Finance must be matched by business-development support. Infrastructure must be matched by value-chain development. Youth training must be matched by real market opportunities. Food-security programming must be linked to enterprise formation, storage, processing, and distribution.

## Bilateral Initiatives

## IPAJ Project

The Initiative Pour l'Autonomisation de la Jeunesse (IPAJ) is a flagship development project in the Central African Republic (CAR) designed to empower young people and reduce gender inequalities through improved socio-professional integration. The European Union (EU) is a primary partner in this initiative and maintains a broad strategic partnership with CAR focused on economic resilience, infrastructure, and governance.

Launched officially on 27 March 2024, IPAJ is scheduled to run through December 2027 under the leadership of Country Director Jean Rugambwa.

- Institutional Framework: The project is co-financed by the European Union and the Agence Française de Développement (AFD). It is implemented by the Institut Européen de Coopération et de Développement (IECD).
- Objectives: The project aims to contributes to the empowerment of young women and men in Bangui and its periphery by facilitating access to high-quality vocational training and entrepreneurship support. A core goal is to reduce the gap in professional opportunities between genders.
- Target Population: The programme primarily targets vulnerable youth aged 18–30 who have dropped out of school, as well as those already enrolled in vocational centres. It also provides support to urban micro-SMEs and market garden producers in the region.
- Operational Scope and Metrics:
- Pre-training: Targeting 1,075 young people, with a 50% quota for women.
- Vocational Training: Aims to train 1,200 youth, of whom 30% are women.
- Integration and Self-Employment: The project seeks to support 800 young people into self-employment, with 50% being women.
- Sectoral Focus: IPAJ specifically encourages women to enter traditionally male-dominated but lucrative sectors, such as construction and public works. By providing technical and human development training, the project aims to transform participants into responsible economic actors within their communities.

## The European Union

The EU's involvement in CAR is guided by the Global Gateway strategy, focusing on infrastructure, digital connectivity, and sustainable growth. For the 2021–2024 period, the EU allocated €204 million in grants under the NDICI – Global Europe instrument.

- Digital Transformation: The EU funds the Central Africa Backbone, an initiative to extend the fiber-optic network across the country. This digital infrastructure is considered essential for modernising the economy and facilitating MSME operations.
- Economic and Fiscal Governance: The EU supports the digitalisation of tax administration and the modernisation of customs procedures to improve transparency and streamline cross-border trade. It also provides support to the Court of Auditors to enhance budgetary transparency.
- Agribusiness and Forestry:
- The EU promotes entrepreneurship in rural areas by supporting an integrated approach to agropastoral activities, specifically targeting value chains for poultry, beef, cassava, and peanuts.
- In the forestry sector, the EU works with the private sector to establish sustainable and equitable logging practices and supports the emergence of a local artisan value chain for wood and charcoal.
- Youth and Social Services: Beyond IPAJ, the EU supports the creation and strengthening of 18 youth centres across the country. It also invests in education, specifically facilitating the transition from primary to secondary school for children and improving the employability of displaced persons and returnees.
- Peace and Security: Through the Team Europe framework, the EU provides critical support to the Special Criminal Court to ensure legal accountability for serious crimes, which is viewed as a prerequisite for a stable investment climate.

## Welthungerhilfe

German-funded initiatives in the Central African Republic are primarily driven by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by Welthungerhilfe (WHH), one of Germany's largest private aid organisations. These programmes are designed to use private sector development as a tool for post-conflict stabilisation and social cohesion.

### *Core Projects and Strategic Objectives*

The collaboration between BMZ and Welthungerhilfe focuses on two main, complementary projects:

- Agricultural Vocational Training for Unemployed and Internally Displaced Youth: This initiative targets young people aged 18–35 in the Bangui region.
- Creating Employment Opportunities for Women and Young Adults: This serves as a supplementary project to provide broader socio-economic support.

The overarching goal of these initiatives is to make the lives of vulnerable populations more socially and economically stable. By providing viable economic alternatives, the programmes seek to reduce migration and crime, and specifically to curb the recruitment of youth by armed militias.

### *Implementation and Practical Support*

The approach combines technical instruction with the material resources needed to launch an enterprise:

- Vocational Training: Participants are trained in various agricultural sectors, including poultry farming, to help them integrate into community economic and food systems.
- Business Starter Kits: Beyond just training, WHH provides entrepreneurs with "starter kits" to facilitate the immediate commencement of business activities.

- Socio-Economic Reintegration: The programmes are intended to transition young people out of vulnerability and into active roles within local cooperatives, reducing dependency on external aid.

### *Impact and Case Study: Poultry Farming*

The impact of these German-funded projects is illustrated by the success of individuals like Nazaire Namkomana, a 29-year-old graduate of the WHH poultry farming training centre.

- Income and Food Security: Before the training, Namkomana struggled with family food security; following the programme, he was able to scale his unit from 50 to 200 chicks, ensuring his children's education.
- Knowledge Transfer: Graduates are encouraged to share their skills with others in their community to further reduce local poverty.
- Scaling Potential: The ultimate aim for participants is to transform these small units into large production companies that can act as stable economic anchors in their communities.

## Multilateral Initiatives

## The World Bank

The World Bank Group's portfolio, guided by the 2021–2025 Country Partnership Framework, focuses on restoring the social contract and promoting economic recovery. Key MSME-related projects include the Agricultural Recovery and Agribusiness Development Support Project (PRADAC), which targets smallholder productivity, and energy initiatives such as PURACEL and PASEEL, which address infrastructure deficits through solar installations like the 25 MWp Danzi plant. Connectivity is addressed through PURIC (road rehabilitation) and PRACAC (river transport between Bangui and Brazzaville).

### *PRADAC (Agricultural Recovery and Agribusiness Development Support Project)*

The Agricultural Recovery and Agribusiness Development Support Project is a critical intervention focused on the primary sector.

- Objectives: Its primary goal is to increase the agricultural productivity of smallholder farmers and promote micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in agribusiness.
- Strategy: It is recommended that agribusiness MSMEs supported by PRADAC be strategically clustered along major transport corridors and river networks to ensure they are not physically isolated and can access regional markets.

### *PURACEL (Emergency Electricity Supply and Access Project)*

The Emergency Electricity Supply and Access Project (sometimes referred to as PURACELL) targets the country's chronic energy scarcity.

- Key Achievement: It financed the 25 MWp Danzi solar photovoltaic power plant, which includes 25 MWh of battery storage.
- Impact: This plant provides a source of more stable electricity production for Bangui, helping to combat the recurrent power outages that paralyze productive activities.

### *PASEEL (Water and Electricity Modernization Project)*

The Water and Electricity Modernization Project focuses on modernizing essential services and extending access to the interior of the country.

- Key Achievement: Under this project, two mini solar photovoltaic power plants of approximately 1 MW each were completed in the towns of Bambari and Berberati.

- Strategic Use: These mini-grids provide the regular daytime power necessary for small processing and manufacturing operations, allowing these regions to establish local processing zones for timber, textiles, and agricultural products.

### *PURIC (Emergency Infrastructure and Connectivity Recovery Project)*

The Emergency Infrastructure and Connectivity Recovery Project addresses severe logistics bottlenecks caused by CAR's fragmented road network.

- Key Achievement: This project enabled the rehabilitation of 400 km of roads in the northwest region of the country.
- Impact: By improving road connectivity, PURIC helps lower the high logistical costs that typically render domestic MSMEs uncompetitive against imports.

### *Other Significant World Bank Initiatives*

In addition to the projects listed above, the World Bank manages several other active programs in CAR:

- PRUCAC (Emergency Food Crisis Response Project): Focuses on increasing food production and enhancing resilience for smallholder farmers and vulnerable households in food-insecure areas.
- PRACAC (Central Africa Corridors Trade and Connectivity Project): An ongoing initiative to improve river transport between Brazzaville and Bangui.
- Ndoyé Project: A $30 million project providing cash transfers to over 300,000 beneficiaries, which stimulates domestic demand for local products while providing a social safety net.
- I-Compete Project: This project supports the Interprofessional Group of Central Africa (GICA) by funding a dedicated SME Section, offering local businesses access to market intelligence and professional training.
- Projet Maïngo (Human Capital and Women and Girls' Empowerment Project): Focuses on human capital development through community safe spaces and school-based programs.

## African Development Bank

The African Development Bank (AfDB) manages 19 projects valued at $579 million, utilising a Portfolio Performance Improvement Plan to ensure aid effectiveness. To address the liquidity crisis, the AfDB signed a €5 million trade guarantee agreement with Ecobank Centrafrique in 2026, supporting local industrialisation and import-export finance. Crucially, the AfDB's investment in regional transport corridors, such as the Pointe-Noire–Brazzaville–Bangui–N'Djamena Corridor, provides a structural solution to the country's landlocked status, integrating domestic MSMEs into larger regional markets.

### *The GUFE Hub in Bambari*

A landmark achievement in the AfDB's support for administrative decentralisation was the inauguration of the first regional branch of the Guichet Unique de Formalités des Entreprises (GUFE-RCA) in Bambari (Ouaka Prefecture) on 17 September 2024.

- Financial and Institutional Framework: The hub was established with an investment of approximately $160,000 (93 million FCFA) under the Projet Diaspora. This initiative is co-financed by the AfDB and the UNDP and focuses on three core pillars: promoting entrepreneurship, fostering innovation and digitalisation, and mobilising the skills of the Central African diaspora.
- Operational Objectives: Prior to this, business registration was exclusive to the capital, Bangui, creating a severe bureaucratic bottleneck for entrepreneurs in the interior. The Bambari hub allows local operators, including youth, women, and internally displaced persons (IDPs), to formalise their businesses locally.

- Economic Impact: By providing a "one-stop-shop" for documents and authorisations, the hub grants regional MSMEs the legal security and tax compliance pathways necessary to access state credit support and participate in public procurement.

### *PARCB-2 (Support Programme for Reconstruction of Grassroots Communities)*

Launched in its second phase in October 2025, PARCB-2 is a flagship $113 million project designed to facilitate the sustainable reconstruction of the country.

- Socio-Economic Reintegration: The programme aims to reintegrate at least 3,500 former combatants, unemployed youth, and vulnerable women, while providing vocational training to 5,000 young people aged 15–25.
- Sectoral Focus: It specifically supports entrepreneurship in agriculture and livestock (including poultry farming, fish farming, beekeeping, and dairy production), as well as small-scale mining and handicrafts.
- Climate Resilience: The programme includes a dedicated $8 million envelope for climate finance to help communities adapt to environmental changes.

### *Trade Finance and Industrialisation*

To address the chronic liquidity issues facing the Central African private sector, the AfDB has prioritised trade facilitation and regional connectivity:

- Ecobank Transaction Guarantee: In April 2026, the AfDB signed a €5 million trade finance guarantee facility with Ecobank Centrafrique. This facility is designed to support the import of essential industrial inputs, agricultural machinery, and telecommunications equipment, specifically targeting agro-industry and light manufacturing.
- Regional Infrastructure: The AfDB is a major funder of the Pointe-Noire–Brazzaville–Bangui–N'Djamena Corridor, committing $282 million for the rehabilitation of the 221 km road segment between Gouga, Mbaïki, and Bangui to improve CAR's landlocked logistics.

### *Portfolio Management and Governance*

Under the leadership of Country Manager Mamadou Coulibaly, the AfDB maintains a rigorous oversight mechanism to ensure aid effectiveness. In April 2025, the Bank and the CAR government adopted an ambitious Portfolio Performance Improvement Plan (PPIP). This plan serves as a strategic lever to identify operational obstacles, speed up project implementation, and ensure that financial commitments translate into tangible results for the population. Additionally, the AfDB supports the PREDIRE project, a $121 million initiative (2024–2029) to upgrade water infrastructure and create over 3,400 jobs in Greater Bangui.

## ECA

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), in collaboration with DANIDA, provides technical cooperation to prepare SMEs for the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). These interventions focus on helping entrepreneurs develop bankable projects and meet regional quality standards.

### *The Regional Value Chain Integration Project*

This project specifically targets the structural challenges that prevent Central African MSMEs from seizing opportunities within the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). The ECA and DANIDA approach is built on the rationale that competitiveness must be established internally before products can successfully reach export markets.

Key activities under this partnership include:

- Capacity Building Workshops: In November 2025, a major national training workshop was held in Bangui for 25 selected MSMEs. The training focused on highly practical aspects, such as understanding the requirements of financial institutions, conducting financial analysis, and developing bankable business plans.
- Technical Training: Entrepreneurs received instruction on AfCFTA trade rules, certification standards, sustainable production methods, and strategic positioning within regional markets.
- High-Level Policy Dialogue: The partnership facilitates discussions between national authorities, the private sector, and financial partners to consolidate a consensus on the reforms needed to enhance MSME competitiveness.

### *Strategic Outcomes and the National Roadmap*

A primary goal of the ECA-DANIDA collaboration was the validation of a national roadmap and an indicative portfolio of projects.

- Targeted Sectors: The initiative focuses on sectors with high potential for local transformation, including agribusiness, timber, textiles, and mining.
- Bridging the Financing Gap: The project aims to reduce the "information gaps" and misunderstandings between local firms and commercial banks, equipping MSMEs to present credible financing proposals to potential investors.
- Alignment with National Priorities: These activities are designed to be coherent with the National Development Plan (NDP 2024–2028) and the Code des PME-PMI, ensuring that international support directly assists the government's structural transformation objectives.

### *Partnership Philosophy*

The support from DANIDA reflects the Kingdom of Denmark's commitment to promoting sustainable and resilient growth models in Africa. By partnering with the ECA, DANIDA assists the CAR government in implementing evidence-based policies that mobilise competitive regional value chains, eventually allowing MSMEs to become autonomous drivers of the national economy. The United Nations Resident Coordinator in CAR has described this collaboration as an "exemplary partnership" that supports national priorities of economic recovery and peace consolidation.

## UNDP and UNIDO

The Central African Republic's youth (aged 18–35) face significant challenges, including high rates of underemployment and vulnerability to recruitment by armed militias. In response, various international organisations have launched targeted empowerment initiatives focusing on agribusiness, technical skills, and digital resilience.

### *UNDP and UNIDO Youth Empowerment Initiatives*

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) drive several programmes aimed at integrating youth into the formal economy.

- Projet Diaspora (UNDP & AfDB): This joint initiative, co-financed by the African Development Bank, focuses on three core pillars: promoting entrepreneurship, fostering innovation and digitalisation, and mobilising the skills of the Central African diaspora. A major achievement of this project was the funding of the first decentralised GUFE-RCA branch in Bambari, allowing youth and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the interior to formalise businesses without travelling to Bangui.
- Agribusiness Development for Youth Empowerment: This UNDP-led sub-regional project targets youth in CAR, Congo, and Gabon. It aims to empower young entrepreneurs by selecting civil society organisations to implement training and capacity-building programmes specifically tailored to the agribusiness sector.

- Opportunities for Youth in Africa (OYA) Programme (UNIDO): UNIDO supports this initiative to provide industrial skills training. The programme is designed to further youth economic inclusion by equipping them with the technical expertise required for local manufacturing and transformation sectors.

### *Songhaï Centre Agro-Pastoralism Training*

The Songhaï Centre provides specialised training focused on the circular economy and sustainable agro-pastoralism.

- Circular Economy Model: The training emphasizes a zero-waste, integrated approach to farming, where the by-products of one activity (such as livestock waste) become inputs for another (such as organic fertiliser for crops).
- Socio-Economic Reintegration: These programmes are strategically designed to transition vulnerable young people out of instability and into active roles within local cooperatives. By combining technical agricultural skills with access to basic starting capital, the centre helps build a self-reliant private sector that reduces dependency on external aid.

### *Cybersecurity and Digital Resilience Bootcamps*

Recognising the importance of digital sovereignty and peacebuilding, the Tec4Peace Bootcamp 2026 was launched with UNDP support.

- Scope and Participation: Held in Senegal, the bootcamp provided intensive training to 112 youth from 21 West and Central African nations, including the Central African Republic.
- Core Curriculum: The initiative combined technical training in cybersecurity with modules on peacebuilding and entrepreneurship.
- Objective: The goal is to empower a new generation of digital leaders who can drive peace and digital resilience across the region, ensuring that technological advancement contributes to social stability rather than conflict.

## International Initiatives Worth Considering

## World Bank

International Finance Corporation (IFC)

- Equity and debt investment in SMEs
- Support for rural banking expansion
- Credit guarantee schemes

### *SME Finance Projects*

Common interventions:

- Credit lines to local banks
- Partial credit guarantees
- Support for leasing markets (equipment finance)

### *Rural Focus*

- Agribusiness SMEs
- Rural off-grid energy firms
- Local manufacturing clusters

## International Finance Corporation (IFC)

The IFC is particularly important in MSME development.

**Core programmes:**

- SME Ventures (early-stage equity)
- Banking advisory services
- Supply chain finance programmes

**Example approach:**

Instead of lending directly to rural firms, IFC:

- Strengthens commercial banks
- Encourages SME lending portfolios
- Reduces perceived risk through guarantees

## International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

IFAD is one of the most rural-focused MSME actors.

Programme areas:

- Rural microfinance
- Producer cooperatives
- Value chain development (coffee, cocoa, livestock, fisheries)
- Rural enterprise incubation

Key model:

"Value chain upgrading":

- Small farmers linked to processors
- MSMEs supported along the chain (transport, storage, processing)

## UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF)

Instruments:

- Digital financial services (mobile money ecosystems)
- Village savings and loan associations (VSLAs)
- Local development finance facilities

Rural relevance:

Especially strong in:

- West Africa
- East Africa
- Small island and fragile states

## United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

UNDP MSME programming focuses on:

- Youth employment schemes
- Post-conflict enterprise recovery
- Local economic development (LED)

**In fragile states:**

- Business grants for returnees
- Entrepreneurship training for ex-combatants
- Market rehabilitation programmes

## African Development Bank (ADB)

***ENABLE Youth Programme***

- Agribusiness entrepreneurship support
- Access to land, finance, and training

## AFAWA (Affirmative Finance Action for Women in Africa)

- Guarantees for women-led SMEs
- Credit risk-sharing mechanisms

**Rural focus:**

- Agricultural processing SMEs
- Rural logistics and transport firms
- Agro-input supply chains

## Initiatives

## Ethiopia: Large-Scale MSME Industrialisation and Agricultural Enterprise Linking

Ethiopia has one of the most structured rural MSME development systems in Africa, combining industrial policy with rural value chains.

Micro and Small Enterprises Development Programme (MSEDP)

Supported by:

- World Bank
- United Nations Development Programme
- Government of Ethiopia

Focuses on moving informal rural enterprises into formal micro and small firms.

- Enterprise registration support (formalisation drives)
- Business training centres (“TVET-linked entrepreneurship centres”)

- Microcredit access via regional financial institutions
- Cooperative formation support

Sector focus:

- Agro-processing (grain milling, oilseed processing)
- Construction materials
- Handicrafts
- Small-scale manufacturing

### *Agricultural Transformation Agency (ATA) Value Chain MSME Integration*

ATA links MSMEs into priority agricultural value chains:

- Coffee
- Sesame
- Livestock
- Horticulture

MSME support includes:

- Warehouse receipt systems (reducing post-harvest loss)
- Transport SME development (rural logistics firms)
- Input distribution SMEs (seed and fertiliser dealers)
- Cooperative upgrading into quasi-enterprises

Rather than "creating SMEs," Ethiopia focused on upgrading informal rural actors into value-chain service providers

## Bangladesh: NGO-Led Rural Enterprise Ecosystem (BRAC Model)

Bangladesh is the global benchmark for NGO-led MSME and rural enterprise development.

The BRAC Microenterprise and Ultra-Poor Graduation Model has a two-tier structure.

### *(1) Ultra-poor graduation programme*

For households below subsistence:

- Asset transfers (goats, poultry)
- Consumption support (cash or food)
- Intensive coaching

### *(2) Microenterprise support*

For slightly higher-income rural households:

- Business training
- Small loans
- Market linkage support

BRAC Rural Value Chain Enterprises programmes seek to address the following sectors.

- Poultry hatcheries
- Dairy collection centres

- Seed distribution networks
- Rural retail shops ("village stores")

Here, BRAC acts as a:

- Financier
- Trainer
- Market intermediary
- Logistics provider

### *Gender dimension*

- Majority of clients are women
- Women-run microenterprises dominate poultry and livestock value chains
- Strong focus on home-based enterprise models due to mobility constraints

## Kenya: Digital Finance and MSME Ecosystem Formalisation

Kenya is the leading African case for mobile money-driven MSME transformation.

M-Pesa Ecosystem Expansion (MSME Layer)

Driven by:

- Safaricom (private sector)
- Supported by donors including World Bank, FCDO, USAID indirectly

The effects MSMEs by enabling the:

- Formalisation of informal traders via mobile payments
- Digital transaction histories enabling credit scoring
- Expansion of rural retail micro-enterprises

## Nigeria: MSME Finance and Youth Agribusiness Scaling

Nigeria combines large-scale youth entrepreneurship programming with fragmented rural markets.

YouWin! (Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria)

Supported by:

- World Bank

Design:

- Competitive business plan grants
- Target: youth MSMEs

Rural component:

- Agro-processing
- Poultry and livestock SMEs
- Food distribution enterprises

Key weakness:

- High attrition after grant phase
- Weak integration with markets

## Rwanda: SME Formalisation and Cooperative Transformation

SME Development Policy + Business Development Fund (BDF)

Supported by:

- World Bank
- African Development Bank

Key tools:

- Credit guarantee schemes (reducing bank risk)
- SME training centres
- One-stop business registration reforms

### *Cooperative to Enterprise Transformation Programme*

- Agricultural cooperatives upgraded into commercial SMEs
- Coffee and tea value chains

**MSMEs become:**

- Processing firms
- Export intermediaries
- Transport/logistics SMEs

*Gender dimension:*

- Strong women-led cooperative movement in agriculture
- Women dominate informal cross-border trade MSMEs

## Uganda: Rural Entrepreneurship and Informal Sector Formalisation

Uganda illustrates mixed donor and government MSME programming; an example being the **Youth Livelihood Programme (YLP), s**upported by the Government of Uganda and World Bank

- Group-based grants for youth MSMEs
- Focus on rural districts

**Sectors:**

- Agriculture
- Trade
- Repair services
- Food processing

### *Microfinance Support Framework*

Uganda has one of Africa's most developed microfinance sectors.

- Village savings and loan associations (VSLAs)
- Rural credit expansion

- Informal enterprise scaling

## India: Massive Rural MSME and Self-Help Group Ecosystem

India is globally significant for scale of rural enterprise programming.

National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM), implemented by the Government of India through World Bank support. This livelihoods programme includes:

- Women's self-help groups (SHGs)
- Federations of SHGs
- Access to credit and training

As a result, SHGs evolve into:

- Dairy microenterprises
- Handicrafts MSMEs
- Food processing units
- Rural retail networks

MUDRA Scheme (Micro Units Development and Refinance Agency)

- Provide collateral-free loans to micro and small enterprises

Rural impact:

- Financing street vendors
- Small agro-processors
- Rural service MSMEs

## DRC: Fragile-State MSME Recovery Programming

Democratic Republic of the Congo shows MSME development under conflict conditions.

Integrated Private Sector Development Projects, supported by the World Bank and UNDP.

Components include:

- Cash grants for restarting businesses
- Market rehabilitation (roads, marketplaces)
- Support for agro-processing SMEs

### *Stabilisation and Early Recovery MSME Support*

- Grants instead of loans (risk too high for credit markets)
- Focus on returnees and displaced populations
- Local trade corridor rehabilitation

## Government Programmes

# Code Des PME-PMI

The legal and institutional architecture is anchored in the *Code des PME-PMI* (Loi n°20.011). Under Article 62 of this Code, the state provides direct financial incentives, with promotional loans of up to 10 million FCFA available for individual small business projects and 30 million FCFA for group initiatives.

### *Classification of Enterprises*

The Code provides a precise legal definition for a recognized PME/PMI, requiring the business to have its headquarters in CAR, be at least 51% owned by Central African nationals, and have an investment of less than 1,000,000,000 FCFA. It further categorises these enterprises into three distinct tiers based on staff size and annual turnover:

- Très Petites Entreprises et Industries (TPEI): These micro-businesses have 20 or fewer permanent employees and an annual turnover not exceeding 10,000,000 FCFA.
- Petites Entreprises et Industries (PEI): These firms employ between 21 and 50 permanent staff, with an annual turnover ranging from 10,000,001 to 30,000,000 FCFA.
- Moyennes Entreprises et Industries (MEI): These larger enterprises have between 51 and 99 employees and an annual turnover between 30,000,001 and 100,000,000 FCFA.

### *Institutional Oversight and Support*

The Code mandates a structured institutional ecosystem to assist these businesses:

- CAPMEA (Centre d'Assistance aux PMEs et à l'Artisanat): A state-led agency responsible for providing technical training, consulting, and information delivery. It specifically helps entrepreneurs compile "bankable" portfolios to overcome structural technical weaknesses that often prevent them from securing credit.
- CTS/PME-PMI (Comité Technique de Suivi): Established under the Ministry of PMEs, this committee assists the Minister in applying the Code's provisions, evaluating applications for tax incentives, and monitoring the performance of registered businesses.
- GUFE-RCA (Guichet Unique de Formalités des Entreprises): This one-stop administrative portal simplifies business registration, modification, and closure. It holds the exclusive authority to issue documents for the Registry of Commerce and Credit Mobilier (RCCM).

### *Financial and Fiscal Incentives*

To stimulate growth, the Code offers several tangible economic benefits to "agreed" or registered businesses:

- Promotional Loans: Eligible individual small businesses can access promotional loans of up to 10 million FCFA, while collective or group projects are eligible for up to 30 million FCFA.
- Customs Reductions: Registered firms benefit from a reduced customs duty rate of 5% on the importation of new machinery, spare parts, and raw materials essential for their investments.
- Public Procurement Quotas: The Code reserves 30% of public markets for PME/PMIs, with half of that quota (15%) specifically earmarked for enterprises owned and managed by women.
- Employment Subsidies: Businesses that hire at least 51% Central African nationals are eligible for state subsidies, including a 25% abatement on employer social contributions for at least one year.

### *Regional Development and Social Focus*

The Code encourages decentralisation by allowing for the creation of Regional Development Funds (Fonds d'Aménagements Régionaux) managed by regional councils. These funds provide investment primes to businesses that choose to relocate their activities from Bangui to priority development regions inland.

Furthermore, the Code emphasises the empowerment of vulnerable populations, specifically youth (aged 18–35) and women, by facilitating their access to entrepreneurial education, vocational training "nurseries," and seed grants to mitigate post-conflict instability.

## CAPMEA

Support for the enterprises outlined above is coordinated by the *Centre d'Assistance aux Petites et Moyennes Entreprises et à l'Artisanat* (CAPMEA), a body under ministerial tutelage specifically tasked with compiling bankable portfolios, technical training, and facilitating monitoring to bridge the credit gap. Regulatory oversight and the evaluation of tax incentives are managed by the *Comité Technique de Suivi des PME-PMI* (CTS/PME-PMI). Established in 1985, it operates under the supervision of the Ministry of SMEs and Private Sector Promotion. Its primary role is to implement government policy regarding the promotion of small and medium enterprises (SMEs), handicrafts, and the informal sector.

Under the current Director General, Parfait Ouafio, CAPMEA manages a vast network comprising 1,500 formal SMEs and 4,000 informal businesses across the country.

### *Core Mandate and Technical Support*

CAPMEA functions as a bridge between local entrepreneurs and the formal economy by addressing the structural "technical weaknesses" that often prevent Central African firms from growing or securing credit. Its specific responsibilities include:

- Bankable Portfolio Development: One of its most critical functions is assisting entrepreneurs in drafting credible business plans and conducting the financial analysis required to create "bankable" dossiers. This is intended to satisfy the strict risk-appraisal methods of commercial banks.
- Capacity Building and Training: The agency provides technical training, consulting, and information delivery to entrepreneurs to improve their managerial and financial literacy.
- Formalisation Assistance: CAPMEA is specifically tasked with helping businesses transition from the informal to the formal sector, granting them legal security and tax compliance pathways.

### *Role Under the Code des PME-PMI*

The Code des PME-PMI (2020) grants CAPMEA significant statutory authority in the oversight and financing of small businesses:

- Validation of Viability: When an enterprise applies for official recognition under the SME regime, its project viability—covering commercial, technical, and financial elements—can be established by CAPMEA.
- Restructuring Plans: MSMEs facing financial or operational distress are entitled to benefit from a restructuring or recovery plan established by CAPMEA to regain viability.
- Facilitating State Loans: Under Article 62 of the Code, collective or group projects supported by CAPMEA are eligible for state-promoted loans of up to 30 million FCFA.
- Mandatory Monitoring: Registered MSMEs are subject to mandatory monitoring by CAPMEA regarding their training, accounting practices, fiscal declarations, and debt repayment performance.

### *Strategic Partnerships and Modernisation*

To enhance its delivery of services, CAPMEA has recently engaged in major international partnerships:

- IFC Partnership (2025): On 30 July 2025, CAPMEA signed a strategic agreement with the International Finance Corporation (IFC) to strengthen the entrepreneurial and financial capacities of local businesses. This partnership involves practical management and finance training adapted to the Central African context, initially targeting 150 enterprises with the long-term goal of reaching the agency's entire 5,500-member network.
- Risk Management: Collaborative efforts with the IFC also focus on improving risk management and credit product design to make MSMEs more attractive to lenders.
- Digital Integration: CAPMEA's training portals are intended to be linked with the government's broader digitisation efforts, such as the Dûnîa platform, to reduce information asymmetry and facilitate flow-based risk assessment by banks.

## GUFE-RCA

Administrative reform for business formalisation is spearheaded by the *Guichet Unique de Formalités des Entreprises* (GUFE-RCA), which has registered 14,645 companies to date. In a significant move to decentralise services and reduce regional inequalities, the government launched the first regional GUFE branch in Bambari in September 2024. This $160,000 initiative, co-financed by the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the UNDP, allows entrepreneurs in the interior to secure legal recognition without the logistical burden of travelling to the capital. The GUFE-RCA works in partnership with the statistics agency (ICASEES) to track formalisation trends and inform national planning.

### *Core Mandate and Legal Authority*

GUFE functions as a centralised incubator that provides "one place, one interlocutor, one procedure, and one payment" for entrepreneurs. Under national law, it holds the exclusive authority to issue documents for the Registry of Commerce and Credit Mobilier (RCCM), a critical legal requirement for any formal business operation in the country.

The agency operates with a pledge of "Mon Entreprise en 48 heures" (My Company in 48 hours), aiming to process all necessary formalities for a viable enterprise within two days.

### *Services and Operational Scope*

GUFE provides a comprehensive range of administrative services to both domestic and foreign investors:

- Business Formalisation: Handling the creation, modification (such as capital increases or changes in management), dissolution, and cessation of activities.
- Legal Protections: Registering company pledges and securities (nantissement/sûretés).
- Investor Advisory: Welcoming, informing, and orienting investors to ensure they navigate the local regulatory environment effectively.
- Resource Center: Providing entrepreneurs with access to information on national wealth in sectors such as mining, agriculture, and forestry.

### *Decentralisation: The Bambari Branch*

Historically, GUFE services were only available in Bangui, creating a significant bureaucratic bottleneck for entrepreneurs in the interior of the country. On 17 September 2024, the government achieved a major milestone by launching its first decentralised branch in Bambari.

This branch was established with a $160,000 (93 million FCFA) investment under the Projet Diaspora, a joint initiative co-financed by the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the UNDP. The Bambari office allows local entrepreneurs, including youth and internally displaced persons (IDPs), to bypass the capital's administrative hurdles, granting them the legal security and tax compliance pathways needed to qualify for state credit support.

### *Tracking and Economic Impact*

Since its inception, GUFE has successfully registered over 14,645 enterprises. The agency plays a vital role in national planning by maintaining a statistical database and publishing quarterly bulletins that track formalisation trends.

Data from GUFE highlights the current landscape of the Central African private sector:

- Form of Registration: Individual enterprises (EI) and Limited Liability Companies (SARL) consistently represent the majority of new registrations.
- Sectoral Dominance: The most frequently registered sectors are Commerce (approx. 49%), Services (34%), and Construction/BTP (9%).
- Demographics: Statistics indicate a need for increased support for women and youth; for instance, in Q2 2021, women accounted for only about 16% of new business creators.

### *Institutional Framework*

Led by Coordinator Romain Pamo, GUFE operates in close collaboration with other state agencies like ICASEES (the national statistics agency) to deliver empirical evidence that informs national development plans. It is supported by a network of major international partners, including the World Bank, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), and the African Development Bank.

## Digitalisation of MEPCI

A cornerstone of macroeconomic governance is the digitalisation of the Ministry of Economy, Planning, and International Cooperation (MEPCI). This was achieved via the Dûnîa digital platform, developed in partnership with the local Central African technology firm EDEN TiiiT. Dûnîa utilises an open-source microservices architecture, ensuring 99.8% system availability and full API interoperability. The platform automates HR, budget management, and macroeconomic modelling, leading to:

- A 70% reduction in administrative processing times.
- A 30% saving on recurring administrative costs.
- A 15% to 20% reduction in project overlaps, enhancing the strategic impact of the $9 billion in secured development funds.

The digitalisation of MEPCI was formalised with the launch of the Dûnîa platform on 3 March 2026. This initiative marks the first time in the history of the Central African Republic that an entire ministry has undergone an end-to-end digital transformation, covering everything from internal workflows and administrative procedures to collaboration with external partners.

### *Partnership and Technical Architecture*

The project is a significant example of a public-private partnership, developed with the Central African technology firm EDEN TiiiT. The firm's leader, entrepreneur Cédric Pidjou, reportedly pre-financed earlier phases of the project personally, highlighting the role of the national private sector in CAR's digital sovereignty.

Technical specifications of the Dûnîa platform include:

- Architecture: Built on an open-source microservices architecture.

- Availability: Designed for high reliability with 99.8% system availability.
- Interoperability: Features full API interoperability, allowing it to connect and share data with other systems.
- Security: Utilises encrypted data structures to protect sensitive governmental and financial information.

### *Core Operational Functions*

Dûnîa acts as a "digital backbone" for economic governance by automating several critical areas:

- Administrative Management: It automates HR and budget management, alongside document workflows.
- Central Project Register: A major innovation that consolidates all governmental, international, and humanitarian initiatives into a single database. This is designed to eliminate information gaps and prevent the duplication of developmental efforts.
- Macroeconomic Analysis: The system models macroeconomic trends, providing the government with the data needed for evidence-based policymaking.
- Financing Tracking: It provides a transparent mechanism for tracking international development financing, which is essential for maintaining the confidence of foreign and domestic investors.

### *Strategic and Financial Impact*

The platform is a cornerstone of the National Development Plan (NDP 2024–2028). It is specifically tasked with managing and coordinating the $9 billion in development finance mobilised during the September 2025 International Investors Roundtable in Casablanca.

By coordinating these projects digitally, the government anticipates several strategic gains:

- Efficiency: A 15–20% reduction in project overlaps and faster disbursement of funds.
- Territorial Balance: Improved oversight to ensure a better territorial balance in public investments across the country.
- Transparency: All processes are digitally traceable, which significantly strengthens accountability and oversight while reducing opportunities for corruption.

### *Measurable Governance Gains*

The transition from paper-based to digital systems has already delivered substantial improvements in ministerial performance:

- Processing Times: Administrative processing times have been reduced by up to 70%.
- Human Resources: Approximately 40% of human resources have been freed from routine paperwork to focus on higher-value tasks.
- Cost Savings: The ministry has achieved up to 30% savings on recurring administrative costs and overheads.

## Recommendations

### 1. Restructuring Financial Intermediation

Access to finance remains the most significant barrier for MSMEs in CAR. To address this, the following steps are recommended:

- Establish a National Partial Credit Guarantee (PCG) Fund: Following successful models in neighbouring countries like Chad and Niger, CAR should operationalise a dedicated guarantee fund to reduce risks for

commercial lenders. This would allow banks to extend credit without requiring prohibitively high physical collateral.

- Implement Digital Credit Appraisal Systems: Leveraging the Dûnîa platform's infrastructure, the government should integrate digital credit registries and AI-enabled appraisal systems. This would allow financial institutions to evaluate risk based on cash flows and transaction histories rather than traditional paper balance sheets, which many MSMEs lack.
- Expand Microfinance Partnerships: Multilateral organisations should continue to scale partnerships, like the recent IFC agreements with CAPMEA and SOFIA Crédit, to design financial products specifically tailored for women-led MSMEs and agricultural cooperatives.

## 2. Coordinating Infrastructure with Value-Chain Development

Technical training is only effective if MSMEs can physically reach markets.

- Strategic Clustering along Corridors: MSMEs supported by projects like PRADAC should be strategically clustered along major transport corridors, such as the Douala–Bangui corridor, and river networks improved by PRACAC to ensure they are not isolated.
- Establish Local Processing Zones: The solar mini-grids installed under PASEEL in regions like Bambari and Berberati should be used as anchors for local processing hubs. This would allow MSMEs to transition from exporting raw materials to local transformation (e.g., timber and agricultural processing), capturing higher value locally.

## 3. Scaling Decentralised Administrative Services

The success of the first decentralised GUFE branch in Bambari indicates a high demand for regional services.

- Roll out Regional 'One-Stop Shops': The government and partners like the AfDB and UNDP should scale the GUFE model to other urban nodes such as Bouar and Bria to lower the administrative costs and time required for business creation in the interior.
- Link Formalisation to Incentives: To encourage MSMEs to move out of the informal sector, GUFE registration should be directly linked to tangible benefits, such as immediate eligibility for promotional loans (10–30 million FCFA) provided for under the Code des PME-PMI and tax grace periods.

## 4. Enhancing Human Capital and Social Inclusion

CAR's youth and displaced populations represent a vast, underutilised economic force.

- Expand Dual Apprenticeship Models: Moving forward, the government should scale the dual training approach (combining classroom theory with on-the-job training) pioneered by the World Bank and AFD to 5,700 out-of-school youth.
- Target Lucrative 'Male-Dominated' Sectors for Women: Programs like the IPAJ project should continue to encourage women to enter profitable sectors like construction and public works through specialised technical training and seed grants to shift social norms and reduce professional gender gaps.
- Sustain Post-Training Coaching: To ensure business survival, vocational training must be followed by at least six months of post-creation coaching and the provision of "starter kits" to allow young entrepreneurs to begin activities immediately.

## 5. Leveraging Digitalisation for Transparency

The Dûnîa platform offers a unique tool for governance that should be further exploited.

- Centralised Digital Registry: The government should use Dûnîa to establish a centralised digital registry of commercial transactions. Connecting this to the banking sector would solve the information gaps that currently drive high interest rates and distrust between public institutions and private firms.

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC · BANGUI DECLARATION ON JOINT ACTIONS

SECTION 6 OF 7

# Water

Water insecurity in rural areas of developing countries is one of the most persistent development constraints because it sits at the intersection of health, agriculture, gender, climate resilience, infrastructure and governance. In many low-income rural settings, water is not simply a public service delivered through stable networks; it is a daily condition of life shaped by distance, seasonality, poverty, institutional capacity and environmental risk. Households often depend on unprotected wells, rivers, ponds, seasonal rainwater collection or informal vendors. These sources may provide temporary access, but they rarely guarantee safety, affordability or reliability. As a result, the problem of water insecurity is not reducible to the absence of water alone. It is also a problem of whether water can be reached, whether it is clean enough to drink, whether it remains available across seasons, and whether institutions exist to manage, maintain and expand access over time.

This wider rural water challenge is marked by four overlapping pressures: access, safety, reliability and governance. Lack of access is often the most visible pressure. In remote villages, water points may be far from homes, forcing households to spend hours each day collecting water. The burden usually falls disproportionately on women and girls, reducing time for schooling, paid work, care responsibilities and rest. Where piped systems are absent or limited, communities rely on wells, boreholes, rivers or surface water, with substantial inequalities between districts, settlements and livelihood groups. Water access therefore becomes a direct development issue: time spent collecting water is time lost from education, agricultural production, income generation and community participation.

Safety is an equally important dimension. Water that is available may still be unsafe. In areas where sanitation systems are weak, open defecation persists or wells are poorly constructed, contamination can spread through drinking water sources. Diarrhoeal disease, cholera, typhoid, intestinal parasites and hygiene-related infections remain closely linked to unsafe water and inadequate sanitation. Children are especially vulnerable, and repeated exposure to waterborne disease can undermine nutrition, school attendance and long-term health. In this sense, water insecurity produces a cumulative burden: it affects immediate survival, but also reinforces longer-term poverty through illness, reduced productivity and pressure on already fragile health systems.

Reliability adds a further layer of insecurity. Rural water systems are highly sensitive to seasonal and climatic variation. Boreholes and wells may function during the rainy season but fail during dry months. Floods can contaminate shallow sources, while drought can reduce recharge and intensify competition between domestic use, livestock and agriculture. Climate variability therefore turns water access into a moving target rather than a fixed infrastructure problem. The same village may appear adequately served at one point in the year and severely water-insecure at another. This instability is especially serious in rural economies where water is needed not only for drinking and hygiene but also for irrigation, livestock, small-scale processing and food security.

These access, safety and reliability problems are made worse where governance and maintenance systems are weak. Responsibility for water may be fragmented across ministries, local authorities, utilities, community committees and external agencies. Decentralisation can bring decision-making closer to communities, but it can also expose capacity gaps where local institutions lack funding, technical skills or authority.

CAR illustrates these global rural water challenges in a particularly acute form. The country presents a striking hydrological paradox: it possesses significant natural water resources, yet much of the population lacks reliable access to safe drinking water and sanitation. The country lies across two major African river systems: the Chari River is a crucial contributor to the Lake Chad basin, while the Ubangi River forms part of the wider Congo basin. This geographic position gives CAR substantial raw water potential. However, natural abundance has not translated into public service delivery, with a central challenge being that the infrastructure, energy supply, maintenance systems, institutional capacity and financing required to capture, treat and distribute water remain insufficient.

The divide between urban and rural access is stark. Rural communities face the familiar pressures seen across developing contexts: long distances to water points, dependence on boreholes or shallow wells, vulnerability to seasonal fluctuations, and limited capacity for repair. Yet the capital, Bangui, also faces severe constraints. The national water utility, Société des Eaux de Centrafrique (SODECA), is unable to meet the full drinking water needs of the city. Many residents, especially in rapidly expanding informal settlements, rely on shallow hand-dug wells that are vulnerable to contamination from surface run-off and domestic waste. Thus, while rural water insecurity is severe, urban water insecurity is also deeply embedded in the country's service-delivery crisis.

Bangui's experience further demonstrates the close relationship between water and energy. Water treatment and pumping depend on reliable electricity, but the city's supply has been constrained by ageing infrastructure and weaknesses linked to the Boali hydropower system. Failures in energy generation and transmission can disrupt pumping, reduce water production and force reliance on costly backup generators. The 2019 water crisis, triggered by the collapse of ageing pumping stations, exposed the fragility of this system. The COVID-19 pandemic added further pressure by disrupting supply chains for chemical reagents and spare parts. In CAR, therefore, water-sector reform cannot be separated from energy-sector rehabilitation. A water network that lacks reliable power remains vulnerable even when treatment plants, pumps or distribution lines exist.

The humanitarian dimension of the crisis remains severe. Millions of people require assistance to access safe water and sanitation services, while displacement linked to conflict and regional instability continues to place pressure on already weak systems. The arrival of refugees and new internally displaced populations often increases demand in areas where water points are already insufficient or damaged. Emergency water trucking and temporary WASH interventions are necessary in acute crises, but they do not solve the underlying problem of fragile municipal, rural and peri-urban systems. The country's water challenge therefore requires action across two time horizons: immediate humanitarian support to prevent disease and protect displaced or vulnerable populations, and long-term investment in infrastructure, governance and utility performance.

CAR has developed a number of formal frameworks intended to address these problems. The Water Code of 2006 provides a legal basis for national water-resource management, including state responsibility for drinking water provision, water-quality protection, pollution control and oversight by relevant ministries and SODECA. It also reflects the principles of Integrated Water Resources Management, recognising that water must be managed across sectors and uses rather than treated as a purely technical service. However, the legal framework has been weakened by limited enforcement, institutional fragmentation and insufficient operational capacity. Laws and policies establish important principles, but they do not on their own repair pumps, expand distribution networks, monitor water quality or finance maintenance.

The National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan for 2017–2021 placed water, sanitation and hygiene within the broader project of post-conflict recovery and reconstruction of the social contract. By prioritising basic services, the plan recognised that access to water is not only a technical development goal but also a measure of state presence, legitimacy and peacebuilding. Expanding safe water and sanitation access was framed as part of restoring confidence between citizens and public institutions. In a country where conflict has damaged infrastructure and weakened public administration, the provision of reliable water services can contribute to

recovery by improving health, reducing local tensions and demonstrating that the state and its partners can deliver essential services.

Sector-specific planning has also focused on improving utility performance and expanding coverage. The First Sector Sub-Programme for Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation, covering 2012–2022, aimed to restore Bangui's water-production capacity, improve SODECA's performance, expand rural water and sanitation access, and support the reintegration of conflict-affected communities through essential services. Its objectives reflected a central reality of the water sector: urban utility reform and rural service expansion must proceed together. If Bangui's water system remains fragile, the capital's health, economic and administrative functions are weakened. If rural areas remain underserved, displacement, disease risk and local inequality deepen. The programme therefore attempted to bridge emergency recovery and longer-term sector development.

The National Water Policy sets a broader strategic direction by emphasising sustainable and equitable management, climate resilience, coordinated investment and the implementation of Integrated Water Resources Management. Its ambition aligns with universal water coverage goals and wider African water-security objectives. In principle, this policy framework recognises the interdependence of domestic water supply, agriculture, energy, environmental protection and climate adaptation. In practice, its success depends on the state's ability to coordinate ministries, mobilise finance, regulate service providers, support local institutions and work effectively with international partners.

Because domestic capacity and financing remain limited, bilateral and multilateral initiatives play a central role in addressing the country's water crisis. One of the most significant development-oriented interventions is the PREDIRE cross-border water infrastructure programme in the Ubangi Basin, involving CAR and the Democratic Republic of the Congo and supported by the African Development Bank. The programme focuses on large-scale infrastructure in Greater Bangui, including a new river intake, pumping station, treatment plant, storage reservoir, distribution pipelines and social water connections. Its importance lies not only in the physical works proposed but also in its framing of water as part of a wider water-food security-climate nexus. By investing in climate-resilient infrastructure and regional water governance, PREDIRE seeks to move beyond short-term repairs toward a more durable system capable of serving a far larger population.

The World Bank-funded Water and Electricity Upgrading Project, known as PASEEL, addresses another core constraint: the link between water access and electricity reliability. By supporting water-supply rehabilitation in Bangui, Berberati and Bambari while also improving electricity generation through hydropower refurbishment and solar power plants, the project recognises that water systems cannot function without dependable energy. Treatment plants, pumping stations and distribution systems require power, and energy failures can quickly turn infrastructure investments into underperforming assets. PASEEL therefore aims to strengthen both sides of the energy-water nexus. Its implementation has faced delays, emergency reallocations and institutional restructuring, but its underlying logic remains central to the country's water-sector recovery: water-service expansion must be matched by reliable energy supply.

Humanitarian planning adds a different but complementary layer. The 2026 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan identifies WASH as one of the most critical priorities in CAR. However, limited funding has forced a highly prioritised approach focused on the most severe, recent and shock-driven needs. This means that humanitarian actors concentrate on life-saving interventions for displaced people and communities facing acute crises, while longer-term structural problems are left to development actors and government institutions. This division of labour is understandable under funding constraints, but it also creates risks. If humanitarian response is too narrow and development investment too slow, communities may remain trapped between emergency support that is temporary and infrastructure plans that take years to materialise.

The European Union Bêkou Trust Fund has sought to occupy the space between emergency relief and longer-term recovery. Established in 2014 after conflict, the fund was designed to stabilise CAR, restore basic services

and connect humanitarian assistance with development. In the water sector, one of its most important contributions has been support for rural water and sanitation through the ANEA Rural Capacity Building Project, implemented with UNICEF from 2018 to November 2025. This project expanded access to safe drinking water, repaired and drilled water points, and improved sanitation through household latrines. Reported achievements include safe water access for more than 525,000 rural residents, rehabilitation or repair of 867 water points, drilling of 174 deep boreholes, and sanitation support for around 150,000 people.

The Bêkou Fund's work is significant because it addresses not only access but also sustainability and local capacity. By supporting ANEA, the national water and sanitation agency, with a modern borehole drilling rig and specialist training for technicians, the initiative attempted to reduce dependence on externally driven emergency provision and strengthen national technical capacity. This focus is crucial in a country where water points often fail because maintenance systems are weak. Drilling new boreholes is important, but the longer-term test is whether national and local institutions can maintain water points, train technicians, manage spare parts and respond quickly when systems break down.

The Bêkou Fund also supported urban recovery in Bangui, particularly in conflict-affected neighbourhoods where vulnerable households lacked reliable access. Piped water terminals and publicly managed fountains provided practical mechanisms for improving access in areas not fully served by SODECA's network. These interventions helped bridge the gap between household-level need and large-scale network rehabilitation. They also illustrate the importance of intermediate service models in fragile contexts. Full household connections may be the long-term goal, but public standpoints, social connections and community-managed water points can provide meaningful improvements while larger infrastructure systems are being rebuilt.

Taken together, these schemes show that CAR's water-sector response is not a single programme but a layered and uneven architecture of law, policy, humanitarian relief, utility rehabilitation, rural capacity-building, climate-resilient infrastructure and regional cooperation. Government frameworks provide the legal and strategic foundation. Humanitarian plans address urgent life-saving needs in shock-affected areas. The Bêkou Fund and ANEA project focus on rural access, sanitation and national technical capacity. PASEEL targets the infrastructure-energy relationship that constrains water production and distribution. PREDIRE aims to build larger-scale, climate-resilient systems in the Ubangi Basin and Greater Bangui. Each initiative addresses a different part of the problem, and their combined value depends on whether they can be coordinated into a coherent national pathway.

The central challenge is implementation. The country already has evidence of policy ambition, donor engagement and programme activity. Yet water access remains low because infrastructure is fragile, services are underfunded, institutions are weak, conflict damage persists and maintenance systems are not yet reliable. The risk is that projects remain isolated: boreholes are drilled without durable maintenance; urban production is expanded without sufficient electricity; humanitarian water trucking continues without transition to permanent networks; policies are adopted without enforcement; and regional infrastructure is planned without sufficient local absorptive capacity. A cohesive water strategy for CAR must therefore connect immediate relief to long-term systems, rural access to urban utility reform, water infrastructure to energy reliability, and national policy to local maintenance.

In this respect, the country's water crisis is best understood as a problem of conversion. CAR has water resources, policy frameworks and international support, but it struggles to convert these assets into reliable, safe and equitable services. Addressing this conversion gap requires sustained investment in treatment, pumping, storage and distribution infrastructure; stronger support for SODECA and ANEA; better coordination between humanitarian and development actors; protection and repair of water points in conflict-affected areas; locally financed maintenance models; and climate-resilient planning that anticipates dry-season scarcity, flooding and displacement pressures. It also requires recognising that water access is inseparable from public health, food security, education, gender equality, urban development and peacebuilding.

The schemes currently present in CAR offer important building blocks. The Water Code and National Water Policy establish the normative basis for state responsibility and integrated management. The Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan links water to social reconstruction. The sector sub-programme identifies the need to restore utility performance and expand rural services. PREDIRE promises major urban and regional infrastructure. PASEEL addresses the energy-water bottleneck. The Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan prioritises acute WASH needs. The Bêkou Fund and ANEA project demonstrate how rural water access can be expanded while building national capacity. None of these efforts is sufficient alone. Together, however, they indicate the shape of a more durable response: one that moves from emergency provision and fragmented projects toward a coordinated system capable of delivering safe, reliable and sustainable water services across both rural and urban communities.

## Bilateral Initiatives

## European Union Bêkou Trust Fund

This fund continues to support resilience and recovery by financing the rehabilitation of water and sanitisation infrastructure in conflict-affected regions, acting as a bridge between emergency aid and long-term development.

The fund was established in 2014 as a dedicated mechanism to support the stabilisation of the Central African Republic and the restoration of basic services following a period of intense conflict. In the water sector, the fund has been a primary bilateral partner, focusing on transitioning from emergency humanitarian relief to sustainable development through long-term infrastructure projects.

### *The ANEA Rural Capacity Building Project*

One of the fund's most significant interventions was the ANEA Capacity Building Project for Sustainable Access to Water and Sanitation in Rural Areas, implemented in partnership with UNICEF. This multi-year initiative ran from 2018 until its conclusion in November 2025, targeting the profound service deficits in the country's most isolated regions.

The programme achieved several measurable outcomes for rural water security:

- Expanded Access: Provided over 525,000 rural residents with access to safe drinking water.
- Infrastructure Development: Rehabilitated or repaired 867 existing water points and drilled 174 new deep boreholes.
- Sanitation Improvements: Supported the construction of latrines for approximately 23,000 households, benefiting 150,000 people with improved hygiene facilities.

### *Sustainability and Technical Sovereignty*

To ensure that these investments survived beyond the life of the trust fund, the programme focused on building the technical sovereignty of the Agence Nationale de l'Eau et de l'Assainissement (ANEA). On 7 November 2025, the European Union and UNICEF officially handed over a modern, high-capacity borehole drilling rig to ANEA to allow the government to independently expand rural water networks. To support the operation of this equipment, twelve ANEA technicians completed specialised training in Italy, covering hydrogeological mapping, mechanical maintenance, and advanced drilling operations.

### *Urban Recovery and Resettlement in Bangui*

While primarily focused on rural areas, the Bêkou Fund also addressed acute water needs in the capital to aid in community resettlement and social cohesion.

- Resettlement Support: In the Castors and Yakite neighbourhoods—areas heavily impacted by civil conflict—the fund financed piped water terminals for 1,400 vulnerable households to facilitate their return.
- Community Management: In the Benz-Vi neighbourhood, the programme installed five municipal public water fountains. These are managed by the national water utility, SODECA, and operate on a cost-recovery model where residents pay a small fee of 25 CFA per 20-litre jerrycan to fund ongoing maintenance.

By the time of its conclusion in late 2025, the Bêkou Fund had served as a critical bridge in the humanitarian-development nexus, moving the Central African Republic closer to its goal of universal water coverage.

## Multilateral Initiatives

# Regional Support Programme for the Development of Cross-Border Water Infrastructure and Resources (PREDIRE)

This programme focuses on the Ubangi Basin in partnership with the Democratic Republic of Congo. Key infrastructure components in the Central African Republic include a new raw water pumping station (6,500 cubic metres per hour), a matching treatment plant, a 50,000 cubic metre storage facility, and the construction of new headquarters for the Water Company of the Central African Republic (Société des Eaux de Centrafrique). The project is a major driver of economic stability, targeting the installation of 15,000 social connections and the creation of 3,400 jobs, of which 1,200 are permanent positions.

### *Funding and Implementation Timeline*

The programme has a total estimated cost of $257 million, financed through a combination of multilateral grants, concessional loans, and national contributions. The African Development Bank (AfDB) Group, through the African Development Fund, approved $134.71 million in direct financing, which includes a $118.27 million grant specifically for the CAR and a $16.44 million concessional loan for the DRC. The project is structured for a five-year implementation period, running from November 2024 to November 2029.

### *Core Strategic Components*

PREDIRE operates on the water-food security-climate nexus and is divided into three distinct functional areas:

- Hydrological Monitoring and Governance: This component focuses on improving hydrological databases and information systems across the Ubangui Basin. It aims to build the management and conservation capacities of regional bodies, specifically the International Commission of the Congo-Ubangi-Sangha Basin (CICOS) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS).
- Infrastructure Development: The programme will construct resilient water supply, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) infrastructure to support regional integration and ensure a secure water supply for households and industries.
- Capacity Building and Social Cohesion: This includes training for more than 1,300 stakeholders. Additionally, in partnership with the UNHCR, the programme will implement a resilience and social cohesion initiative to benefit 25,000 displaced persons

### *Physical Infrastructure Targets in CAR*

The physical works for the CAR component are primarily concentrated in Greater Bangui. Key targets include:

- A new river water intake and a raw water pumping station with a capacity of 6,500 cubic metres per hour.
- A modern water treatment plant with an equivalent capacity of 6,500 cubic metres per hour.
- A municipal water storage reservoir with a capacity of 50,000 cubic metres.

- The extension of 208 kilometres of municipal water distribution pipelines.
- The installation of 15,000 subsidized social water connections for vulnerable households.
- The construction of new headquarters for the national water utility, SODECA.

### *Impact and Beneficiaries*

PREDIRE is projected to benefit more than 2.4 million people living in the Ubangui cross-border basin, 51 per cent of whom are women. The project is expected to create 3,400 local jobs, including 1,200 permanent operational positions. Notably, 100 per cent of the programme's financing is dedicated to combating the effects of climate change, making it a flagship climate adaptation project within the AfDB's regional portfolio.

## Water and Electricity Upgrading Project (PASEEL)

This $20 million World Bank project, funded through the International Development Association, addresses the performance of national utilities. A significant institutional change involved moving the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) to the Ministry of Development of Energy and Water Resources (MDEWR). This move was necessitated by capacity constraints in the original PIU—housed under the Ministry of Transport—which was overloaded with CEMAC transport-sector projects. PASEEL focuses on rehabilitating boreholes and distribution networks in secondary towns like Berberati and Bambari, while also funding the critical refurbishment of turbine alternators at the Boali 1 hydropower plant to stabilise Bangui's energy-water link. The project was approved in January 2018 with a total budget of US$20 million provided as a grant from the International Development Association (IDA).

### *Project Structure and Financial Reallocations*

PASEEL is organised into four functional components, though its execution has required significant restructuring to address emergency crises:

- Component 1: Water Supply Infrastructure: This component focuses on the physical rehabilitation of production and distribution systems. Its budget was increased from US$6.7 million to US$7.4 million to account for emergency interventions in Bangui and additional network works in Berberati.
- Component 2: Energy Infrastructure: Originally allocated US$8.4 million (later revised to US$8.1 million), this component refurbishes hydropower turbine alternators and extends the electricity grid to improve the reliability of power required for water pumping.
- Component 3: Technical Support: This provides institutional capacity building for the national water utility (SODECA) and the energy utility (ENERCA).
- Component 4: Contingent Emergency Response: This allows for the rapid reallocation of funds in the event of a major natural disaster or humanitarian emergency.

### *Physical Interventions and the "Energy-Water Nexus"*

A core innovation of PASEEL is its focus on the energy-water nexus, ensuring that water utilities have the reliable power necessary to maintain distribution.

- Solar Integration: To reduce SODECA's dependency on expensive and unreliable diesel generators, PASEEL funded the construction of two 1-MW mini solar photovoltaic plants in Bambari and Berberati. These provide the municipal water treatment plants with a sustainable daytime energy source.
- Bangui Emergency Repairs: In April 2019, a major water crisis in the capital caused by the failure of archaic intake pumps forced the World Bank to reallocate development funds to perform emergency municipal pump repairs, completing the installation of 13 new pumps by early 2021.

- Provincial Works: In Berberati, the project has rehabilitated a municipal water tower and extended the pipeline network, while in Bambari, works include the total rehabilitation of the river water intake and treatment plant.
- Subsidised Connections: The project financed the installation of 2,600 subsidised household water connections, targeting 2,000 families in Bangui and 600 in provincial centres.

### *Implementation Challenges and Restructuring*

PASEEL has faced substantial delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic, supply chain disruptions for a landlocked nation, and protracted insecurity along the primary trade corridor from Cameroon. These challenges led to a formal restructuring in 2022, which extended the project's closing date to June 30, 2023.

The restructuring also addressed institutional capacity by moving the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) from a shared arrangement with the Ministry of Transport to a dedicated unit nested directly within the Ministry of Development of Energy and Water Resources (MDEWR). Despite these efforts, the scale of the infrastructure deficit necessitated a revision of targets: the number of people expected to gain access to improved water sources through PASEEL was adjusted from an original goal of 40,000 down to 32,000 inhabitants.

## 2026 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP)

The 2026 plan identifies Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) as a critical priority. While the number of people in need has decreased by 9 per cent to 2.3 million, this still represents a staggering 35 per cent of the total population. Due to funding constraints, the plan utilises a "hyper-prioritisation" strategy and is a core component of the "Humanitarian Reset," focusing on life-saving interventions and transitioning structural needs to development actors.

### *Scale of Need and Targets*

- People in Need: Approximately 2.3 million people—roughly 35 per cent of the national population—require immediate humanitarian assistance this year. This represents a 9 per cent decrease from 2025, a reduction attributed not to a total disappearance of need, but to a narrowing of the humanitarian scope to focus solely on recent shocks.
- Targeted Population: The humanitarian community aims to assist 1.3 million of the most vulnerable citizens, with 932,200 individuals designated as "hyper-prioritised".
- Financial Requirements: The total funding requested for the 2026 HNRP is US$264.1 million, which is the lowest financial appeal for the country in seven years.

### *Sectoral Prioritisation and Methodology*

Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) has been identified alongside food security and health as one of the three most critical priority sectors for the 2026 response. To allocate limited resources, the plan employs a "hyper-prioritisation" methodology based on three cross-referenced factors:

1. Objective Severity: Identifying regions in "Phase 4" (Emergency) of the WASH Severity Classification, where between 80 and 100 per cent of households rely on unimproved or surface water.
2. Community Urgency: Integrating feedback from over 11,100 household consultations, which consistently ranked clean water as a top priority.
3. Operational Feasibility: Accounting for security risks and seasonal access constraints, such as road washouts, to ensure aid can be delivered safely.

### *Strategic Focus and Exclusions*

The 2026 HNRP explicitly differentiates between humanitarian shocks and structural deficits.

- Shock-Driven Focus: Water interventions are strictly limited to vulnerabilities arising from acute events within the last 24 months, such as recent armed conflict, seasonal flooding, or disease epidemics like cholera.
- Structural Exclusions: Long-term, chronic challenges—including the rehabilitation of SODECA's deteriorated municipal pipe networks and permanent rural sanitation programmes—are excluded from the humanitarian plan. These "structural needs" are now expected to be addressed solely by government and development actors, such as the World Bank and the African Development Bank.

### *Operational Challenges*

The capacity to deliver water services has been severely hampered by drastic cuts in international aid. In 2025, funding shortfalls led to the closure of 116 operational bases belonging to 60 different humanitarian organisations. Nearly half of these closures occurred in the ten sub-prefectures with the highest levels of need, forcing the remaining 90 organisations to adopt a more localised and "area-based" approach to maintain proximity to affected communities.

## International Initiatives Worth Considering

## Ethiopia: One WASH National Programme (OWNP)

Supported by:

- World Bank
- UNICEF
- Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
- African Development Bank

OWNP is one of the clearest attempts globally to merge fragmented rural water programming into a single national system.

Core components include:

### 1. Rural water infrastructure expansion

- Boreholes in arid and semi-arid regions
- Handpump installation and rehabilitation
- Gravity-fed rural piped schemes in highlands

### 2. Institutional integration

Before OWNP, water, sanitation, and hygiene were run as separate donor projects. Now they exist as single national planning framework across ministries and donors

### 3. Community management systems

- Water user committees responsible for maintenance
- Local fee collection systems
- Training of pump mechanics at district level

OWNP explicitly tries to solve:

- Broken pumps
- Lack of spare parts

- Weak maintenance financing

Limitations:

- Sustainability still varies widely by region
- Arid lowland areas remain structurally difficult to serve

## Kenya: ASAL Water Systems and Climate-Resilient Rural Water Expansion

Water Sector Trust Fund (WSTF)

Supported by:

- Government of Kenya
- World Bank
- UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

WSTF is a financing mechanism for rural and arid water systems, not just a construction programme.

Core interventions include:

### 1. Rural water service grants

- Funding for small town and rural water utilities
- Community water projects in remote areas

### 2. ASAL (Arid and Semi-Arid Lands) water systems

- Boreholes with solar pumping
- Water kiosks in pastoral regions
- Mobile water delivery in drought periods

Complementary programme: Ending Drought Emergencies (EDE)

- Multi-sector drought resilience strategy
- Integrates water, livestock, and livelihoods

***Gender dimension***

- Women's time burden in water collection is a central programme metric
- Water points often designed near settlement clusters to reduce travel distance

# Government Programmes

## Water Code of 2006 (Law No. 06.001)

This remains the foundational legal framework for water governance. It establishes the regulatory environment for resource management and defines the legal responsibilities of sectoral stakeholders, aiming to transition the sector toward modern regulatory standards.

The Code is built upon several core legal and operational pillars:

- National Ownership and Management: The law establishes national ownership over all water resources within the territory. It mandates the implementation of Integrated Water Resources Management

(IWRM), a process which promotes the coordinated development and management of water, land, and related resources to maximise economic and social welfare.

- State Responsibility: Under this Code, the government is legally responsible for the integrated management of all water resources and facilities, as well as the actual provision of drinking water to the population.
- Environmental Protection and Pollution Control: A significant portion of the Code is dedicated to the protection of water sources against all forms of contamination. It specifically regulates the disposal of both industrial and domestic pollutants into water bodies to safeguard ambient water quality.
- Administrative Oversight: The institutional administration of the sector, as defined by the framework of the Code, is primarily held by the Ministry of Development of Energy and Water Resources (MDEWR). This body holds responsibility for sector policy and the regulatory oversight of the national water utility, *Société des Eaux de Centrafrique* (SODECA).

### *Legal and Implementation Limitations*

Despite providing a robust theoretical framework for water governance, the Water Code faces challenges regarding its practical application. Comparative legal analyses highlight that while the Code establishes state responsibility, CAR has not formally adopted a justiciable "human right to water and sanitation" within its domestic laws or constitution. This omission means that citizens lack a formal judicial mechanism to legally compel the state to deliver services, leaving access to potable water largely dependent on discretionary government programmes and international humanitarian interventions.

Furthermore, high levels of institutional fragmentation and weak regulatory enforcement have historically prevented the capital allocations mandated by the Code from translating into sustainable local services. This is exacerbated by the country's "hydrological paradox," where the legal mandate for management exists, but the financial and technical capacity to maintain infrastructure remains critically low.

## National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan 2017–2021

The National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan 2017–2021 (NRPP), also referred to in official documents as the Plan for the Recovery and Consolidation of Peace (RCP), was established as a cornerstone of a "new social contract" designed to restore essential services and reverse the collapse of national security. The government of the Central African Republic (CAR) identified the water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) sector as one of eight priority sectors within this framework.

The plan's approach to water was defined by several key financial and strategic parameters:

- Financial Allocation: The NRPP prioritised water, education, and health as the core components of Pillar 2, which focused on the social contract. This pillar was supported by a dedicated budget of approximately US$146.7 million.
- Primary Access Goal: The central commitment of the NRPP regarding the water sector was to provide safe drinking water, hygiene, and sanitation services to an additional 1,500,000 people by the end of 2021.
- Strategic Objectives: To achieve its goals, the NRPP outlined five specific strategic tracks for the water sector:
- Improving physical access to safe drinking water and sanitation infrastructure.
- Strengthening existing government structures to enhance the delivery of these services.
- Establishing formal institutional, legal, and regulatory instruments for the sector.
- Developing effective tools to improve knowledge, monitoring, and evaluation across the water sector.

- Implementing social and community-based communication strategies aimed at altering norms and behaviours to ensure that WASH interventions remained sustainable over the long term.

### *Infrastructure and Emergency Targets*

Under the NRPP's recovery framework, the government set specific, measurable targets for infrastructure deployment. These included the construction of 800 water wells, the distribution of 2,000 hand-washing systems to households, and the provision of 2,000 "sanplat" latrine slabs to vulnerable families.

### *Implementation Challenges*

Despite the plan's ambitious scope, technical assessments indicate that the translation of these policies into sustainable services was hindered by systemic issues. High levels of institutional fragmentation and weak regulatory enforcement often prevented capital allocations from reaching local populations. Furthermore, while the NRPP sought to establish institutional instruments, the country's lack of a justiciable "human right to water" meant that citizens had no formal judicial mechanism to compel the state to deliver on these plan-based commitments, leaving service delivery largely dependent on international humanitarian funding.

## First Sector Sub-Programme for Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation

This sub-programme targets increased coverage and the operational performance of the Water Company of the Central African Republic (Société des Eaux de Centrafrique). The strategic intent is to improve the efficiency of the national utility to ensure urban distribution meets rising demand. The programme, which ran from 2012 to 2022, was a primary national initiative designed to address the Central African Republic's acute infrastructural decay. Managed by the Direction Générale de l'Hydraulique (DGH) in collaboration with the Ministry of Economy and Finance, the programme sought to reverse decades of neglect in both the capital and key rural regions.

### *Operational and Coverage Goals*

The programme was built around specific, measurable targets aimed at addressing the "hydrological paradox" of the country through restored production and expanded access:

- Restoring Bangui's Production: A critical goal was to restore the nominal drinking water production capacity of Bangui's single river pumping station. The objective was to double its output from 750 cubic metres per hour to 1,500 cubic metres per hour.
- Expanding Rural Access: In the four targeted rural prefectures, the sub-programme aimed to significantly increase coverage rates. It set a target to raise drinking water access from 28 per cent to 67 per cent and to improve sanitation coverage from a negligible 1.7 per cent to 10 per cent.
- Social Reintegration: Beyond infrastructure, the programme was designed to support the reintegration of conflict-affected people into their respective communities by providing essential life-sustaining services.

### *Programme Components*

The sub-programme was structured into three distinct functional areas to ensure the sustainability of the investments:

1. Institutional Capacity-Building: Strengthening the administrative and technical capabilities of national water agencies to manage assets more effectively.
2. Infrastructure Development: The physical construction and rehabilitation of drinking water supply and sanitation facilities in urban and rural zones.
3. Programme and Knowledge Management: This included ongoing management, monitoring, evaluation, and the development of knowledge tools to track the sector's progress.

### *Impact and Beneficiaries*

The initiative was projected to benefit approximately 1,260,000 inhabitants. This included one million residents in the city of Bangui and over 250,000 people across the targeted rural prefectures. The sub-programme served as a foundational step toward the government's long-term commitment to formulate and implement a comprehensive National Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Program by 2030, which aims for universal water coverage across the territory.

## National Water Policy

This policy outlines the overarching goals for sustainable resource management. It seeks to ensure that hydrological wealth is managed equitably to benefit all citizens, focusing on long-term sustainability and climate resilience. The policy was established to provide a strategic roadmap to overcome the "hydrological paradox" of the country, where vast renewable water resources have historically failed to translate into reliable access for the population.

The policy is defined by several core strategic objectives designed to reform the governance of the sector:

- Awareness and Engagement: One of the primary goals of the policy is to create both individual and collective awareness of water-related issues across the country. It seeks to ensure the active engagement of a diverse range of actors—including local communities, the private sector, and international partners—to solve critical resource management problems.
- Synergy in Investment: The policy aims to promote greater synergy and coherence between public and private investments. By coordinating these financial flows, the government seeks to more effectively mobilise resources for key infrastructure in water access, irrigation, and hydropower.
- Implementation of IWRM: A central pillar of the policy is the promotion of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM). This approach focuses on the coordinated development of water, land, and related resources to maximise socioeconomic welfare without compromising the sustainability of vital ecosystems.

### *Alignment with Global and Regional Goals*

The National Water Policy does not exist in isolation but is designed to align CAR with broader developmental frameworks. It serves as a foundational step toward the government's ambitious target of achieving universal water coverage by 2030 through a comprehensive National Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Programme. Furthermore, it integrates the "Africa Water Vision 2063," which seeks to ensure water security across the continent as part of the African Union's long-term agenda.

### *Integration with Climate Resilience*

The policy is increasingly being adapted to address the impacts of climate change. Through the Global Water Leadership in a Changing Climate (GWL) programme—funded by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)—CAR is working with international partners like UNICEF and the Global Water Partnership (GWP) to develop holistic policies that enhance national climate resilience. This involves using hydro-meteorological forecasting to better prepare for the increased frequency of floods and droughts, which have historically hampered water management efforts.

## Recommendations

### 1. Strengthening the Humanitarian-Development Nexus

The CAR's water sector is currently defined by a heavy reliance on external funding, which accounts for approximately 94.9 per cent of capital expenditures. The 2026 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP)

reflects a shift towards addressing only acute, shock-driven needs, such as conflict or disease outbreaks, while excluding chronic structural deficits like pipe network rehabilitation. To prevent further regression in water coverage, it is strategically vital for development actors to work with the national government to move beyond emergency water trucking and focus on permanent, climate-resilient municipal infrastructure.

## 2. Prioritising the Energy-Water Nexus

A primary bottleneck to urban water distribution is the national utility's dependency on an unreliable national power grid to operate its treatment plants and pumps. Strategic interventions should follow the model established by the Water and Electricity Upgrading Project (PASEEL) and the Danzi solar plant, which utilise decentralized renewable energy to power water facilities. Systematically pairing all future water infrastructure with dedicated solar photovoltaic power would reduce operational costs and ensure a more reliable supply of potable water.

## 3. Fostering Community Ownership and Local Financial Sustainability

Infrastructure frequently fails in unstable regions because of a lack of maintenance and spare parts. Strategic support should be prioritised for models that build local capacity, such as the establishment of Water Point Management Committees (COGES) and Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs). These community-led groups allow rural residents to save and borrow funds specifically for pump repairs, ensuring that infrastructure remains functional long after international organisations have departed.

## 4. Reforming Legal and Institutional Frameworks

Although the Water Code of 2006 provides a theoretical framework for governance, the CAR has not formally adopted a justiciable "human right to water and sanitation" in its domestic law. Formally adopting this right would provide citizens with a judicial mechanism to compel the state to deliver services. Additionally, reducing high levels of institutional fragmentation between ministries is essential to ensuring that capital allocations translated into sustainable local services.

## 5. Utilising Transboundary Hydro-Diplomacy and Data Expansion

Given its domestic fragility, the CAR should leverage regional bodies like the International Commission of the Congo-Ubangi-Sangha Basin (CICOS) and the Lake Chad Basin Commission to coordinate resources and access larger regional development grants. Furthermore, expanding the hydro-meteorological observation network is a critical priority; the current lack of weather stations makes it difficult to prepare for the floods and droughts that frequently contaminate water supplies and destroy infrastructure.

## 6. Modernising Urban Extraction and Piped Networks

In Bangui, the municipal piped network currently reaches only about 20 per cent of the population, forcing the majority to rely on contaminated shallow wells. Strategic efforts should be directed towards extending distribution networks into informal settlements and systemically exploiting deep Precambrian carbonate aquifers. These deep reservoirs offer high-quality groundwater that is naturally protected from the surface runoff and biological contamination that plague the city's shallow wells.

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC · BANGUI DECLARATION ON JOINT ACTIONS

SECTION 7 OF 7

# Youth Unemployment

Youth unemployment in rural developing contexts is often a condition of structural underemployment: young people work, but they work in low-productivity, informal, seasonal and poorly paid activities that do not provide secure livelihoods. In rural economies where agriculture dominates, young women and men often enter subsistence farming, family labour, petty trade or casual agricultural work not because these activities offer a viable route to prosperity, but because there are few alternatives. The problem is therefore better understood as a youth livelihood bottleneck: labour is abundant, but productive opportunities are scarce.

This bottleneck is shaped by a set of mutually reinforcing constraints. Agriculture remains the main employer in many rural areas, yet limited mechanisation, fragmented landholdings, weak access to inputs and poor market connectivity keep returns low. Rural economies also tend to lack the non-farm sectors that could absorb young workers, such as agro-processing, transport and logistics, small-scale manufacturing, formal retail and business services. Even when schooling expands, education and training systems often fail to equip youth with practical, market-relevant skills. Technical and vocational education may be fragmented, underfunded or disconnected from local labour demand, while entrepreneurship is held back by limited collateral, weak credit histories and high perceived risk among lenders.

These pressures are intensified by demography. Many Sub-Saharan African countries have very young populations, and labour supply is growing faster than formal job creation. Where rural youth migrate to cities, they often encounter another form of informality: insecure urban work, high living costs and limited absorption into wage employment. Gender further shapes the experience of unemployment and underemployment. Young women face barriers linked to early marriage, unpaid care responsibilities, restricted access to land and credit, and weaker educational outcomes. Young men, particularly in fragile settings, may face heightened exposure to recruitment into armed groups, criminal economies or other violent networks. In conflict-affected states, youth unemployment is therefore not only an economic concern; it is also a peace and security issue.

CAR illustrates this challenge in acute form. The country possesses substantial natural resources, including gold, diamonds, forests and agricultural potential, yet it remains trapped in a cycle of fragility, weak state presence, chronic insecurity and limited formal economic opportunity. Its youth population should represent a demographic dividend, but in present conditions it is also a source of vulnerability. A large share of the population is under 35, and young people enter adulthood in an economy where education systems are disrupted, labour markets are overwhelmingly informal, and insecurity reduces both investment and mobility.

Official unemployment indicators only partly capture the scale of the problem. Modelled youth unemployment rates for CAR sit at roughly one in ten young workers, but this figure obscures widespread inactivity, underemployment and survivalist work. The more revealing indicators are the high number of out-of-school youth, the dominance of informal employment and the small proportion of young people who secure wage-paying jobs. Many young Central Africans therefore move between informal trading, subsistence agriculture, casual labour, unpaid family work and periods of inactivity.

The relationship between exclusion and insecurity is particularly important. When young people cannot access credible pathways into education, training, employment or enterprise, armed groups and militias can offer money, status, protection or belonging. In such contexts, unemployment and underemployment become part

of a conflict economy. Recruitment into armed groups is therefore also shaped by the absence of legitimate livelihoods.

Regional and gender disparities deepen these vulnerabilities. Opportunities are concentrated in Bangui and a handful of relatively accessible localities, while conflict-affected rural areas often experience weaker education provision, limited training options and fewer employers. Young women face distinct barriers, including lower literacy, higher school dropout, care burdens and difficulty entering sectors traditionally dominated by men. Any serious response to youth unemployment in CAR therefore has to do more than count jobs. It must rebuild the institutions, skills systems, local economies and social trust that allow young people to imagine a future outside violence and precarious survival.

CAR's national policy architecture recognises this link between employment, reintegration and peacebuilding. The National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan, known as the RCPCA, provides the broad recovery framework. It treats economic recovery, the restoration of the social contract and reconciliation as connected priorities. For youth employment, this means that labour-intensive public works, community infrastructure, vocational training and reintegration are not narrowly technical labour-market measures; they are instruments for stabilisation. By giving young people paid work, skills and visible roles in rebuilding their communities, these schemes aim to reduce the appeal of armed mobilisation while restoring confidence between citizens and the state.

The National Employment and Vocational Training Policy Framework, or PNEFP, complements this agenda by focusing more directly on employment creation, vocational training and social inclusion. Its importance lies in its identification of vulnerable groups: poorly educated youth, displaced people, returnees, demobilised young fighters and the long-term unemployed. In principle, this gives CAR a framework for linking training provision with the realities of fragility. Rather than serving only those already close to the labour market, the policy points toward second-chance pathways for young people whose education and work histories have been interrupted by conflict.

The National TVET Strategy similarly seeks to unify and reform a fragmented technical and vocational education system. Its core challenge is alignment: training must correspond to real opportunities in local economies, including agriculture, construction, public works, mechanics, services, entrepreneurship and emerging small enterprise sectors. The Central African Agency for Vocational Training and Employment, ACFPE, is central to this system. It is expected to support job matching, training, labour-market information, certification and the management of vocational training funds. Yet its effectiveness is constrained by the narrow formal tax base, limited funding, weak administrative reach and the concentration of services in Bangui.

Bilateral and multilateral programmes have attempted to fill parts of this implementation gap. The World Bank-supported E KPENGBA project, for example, links local governance, community resilience and socio-economic reintegration. It builds on earlier labour-intensive approaches by financing community infrastructure, strengthening local authorities and providing reintegration support for ex-combatants. Its emphasis on labour-intensive public works is significant because such schemes can generate short-term income while repairing roads, markets and other local assets that support longer-term economic activity. However, their developmental value depends on whether temporary work is connected to skills acquisition, savings, entrepreneurship support or pathways into more durable livelihoods.

Social protection programmes pursue a related objective from another angle. Adaptive and productive safety nets provide cash transfers, human capital support and household stabilisation in settings where poverty itself prevents young people from taking up education, training or enterprise opportunities. For youth unemployment, this matters because employability is not only about skills. Young people who are hungry, displaced, caring for relatives or unable to pay transport costs are unlikely to complete training or start

businesses. Productive safety nets can therefore create the minimum stability needed for young people and their households to invest in livelihoods.

Education recovery interventions address another part of the employment pipeline. Accelerated learning, second-chance education and education technology initiatives are crucial in a country where many young people have missed years of schooling. For out-of-school youth, the route into employment cannot begin with advanced technical training if basic literacy, numeracy and foundational learning are missing. Programmes such as Education for All, supported by the French Development Agency, respond to this problem by linking basic education, vocational training, teacher development and income-generating activities. Its focus on underserved localities outside the capital is especially relevant because rural inequality is one of the reasons youth unemployment becomes geographically and socially entrenched.

The Initiative Pour l'Autonomisation de la Jeunesse, or IPAJ, is a more explicitly employability-oriented intervention. Co-financed by AFD and the European Union and implemented by the European Institute for Cooperation and Development, it focuses on young people aged 18 to 30 in Bangui and surrounding areas. Its three pillars—education, vocational training and entrepreneurship support—reflect the need to move beyond narrow classroom-based training. IPAJ's attention to young women is particularly important because gender inequality restricts access to both training and employment. By supporting entry into sectors such as construction and public works, alongside entrepreneurship and professional integration, the programme seeks to challenge occupational segregation and connect young women to higher-value opportunities.

United Nations peacebuilding operations also treat youth livelihoods as part of violence reduction. MINUSCA's Community Violence Reduction programme targets high-risk youth and former combatants through vocational training, civic education, conflict resolution and start-up support. Its logic is that reintegration must be social as well as economic. A young person leaving an armed group may need income, but also community acceptance, psychosocial support, civic identity and alternatives to violent networks. This is why livelihood support, mediation and social cohesion activities are often combined in CAR's youth-focused stabilisation programmes.

The African Development Bank's support through PARCB-2, the Support Programme for the Reconstruction of Grassroots Communities, follows a similar reconstruction logic. It aims to strengthen social cohesion, revive local economic activity and support employment and entrepreneurship in conflict-affected regions, including through agropastoral activities, crafts and community-level reintegration. This matters because CAR's youth employment challenge cannot be solved only through urban training centres. Rural livelihoods must become more productive, diversified and resilient if young people are to find viable work close to home. Support for poultry, fish farming, beekeeping, dairy production, artisanal skills and local value chains can help shift youth work from subsistence survival toward income-generating activity, provided that market access, inputs and follow-up support are in place.

European Union and multi-donor trust fund programmes add another layer to this ecosystem. The Bêkou Trust Fund has supported reconciliation, social cohesion, public works, youth centres and returnee reintegration. RELSUDE and Kiri Ngo Na Kodro similarly connect socio-economic stabilisation, vocational skills, basic services, psychosocial support and reintegration for displaced people and returnees. Their shared contribution is to recognise that unemployment in CAR is embedded in community disruption. A young returnee or displaced person may need training, but also documentation, housing, family reintegration, trust with neighbours and access to basic services before employment support can succeed.

Taken together, these initiatives show that CAR is not lacking strategies or programme models. The country has a dense set of schemes that address different points along the youth employment pathway: second-chance education for those who left school early; vocational training for practical skills; labour-intensive public works for short-term income and infrastructure repair; social protection for household stability; entrepreneurship support for self-employment; and reintegration programmes for ex-combatants, returnees and displaced

youth. The strongest programmes are those that combine several of these elements rather than treating employment as a single intervention.

However, the challenge remains one of coherence, scale and sustainability. Short-term public works can reduce immediate vulnerability, but they do not automatically create lasting employment. Vocational training can improve employability, but only if curricula are linked to real labour demand and accompanied by tools, apprenticeships, finance and business support. Entrepreneurship schemes can help youth generate income, but they are unlikely to succeed where credit, markets, security and infrastructure are absent. Reintegration initiatives can reduce recruitment risks, but they require long-term community acceptance and follow-up. Gender-focused programmes can open new opportunities for young women, but they need to address social norms, safety, childcare and employer attitudes as well as technical skills.

The most persuasive reading of CAR's youth unemployment crisis is therefore that it is a systems problem. It begins with weak rural productivity and limited economic diversification, passes through disrupted education and underfunded vocational training, and is intensified by gender inequality, displacement and insecurity. It then feeds back into conflict, because excluded young people become more vulnerable to armed recruitment and criminal economies. The schemes currently operating in CAR are most valuable when they interrupt this cycle at several points at once: keeping youth in learning, helping out-of-school youth return to education, providing practical and marketable skills, financing small income-generating activities, rebuilding local infrastructure, supporting reintegration and strengthening social cohesion.

Ultimately, youth employment in the CAR should be understood as a cornerstone of peacebuilding and state recovery.

## Bilateral Initiatives

# Education for All

The Education for All programme is a key developmental intervention in the Central African Republic (CAR) financed by the French Development Agency (AFD; *Agence Française de Développement*). The programme is designed to tackle the deep disparities in access to essential services between urban and rural areas, which remains a significant barrier to balanced development in the country.

### *Strategic Objectives and Relevance to Youth Unemployment*

The programme's primary focus is on basic education and vocational training to improve the long-term employability of disenfranchised youth. Its relevance to the issue of youth unemployment is established through several strategic channels:

- Second-Chance Education: The programme specifically targets young people who are either out-of-school or have received only marginal schooling. By providing them with the opportunity to continue and complete their basic education, it equips them with the foundational literacy and numeracy skills that are positively correlated with higher wage earnings and stable employment in CAR.
- Vocational Training: In addition to basic schooling, the programme supports vocational training to provide youth with practical, market-relevant skills. This is a "curative" strategy intended to reduce their vulnerability to recruitment by armed groups and move them away from low-productivity survivalist activities in the informal sector.
- Income-Generating Activities (IGA): To ensure the sustainability of educational outcomes, the programme includes the development of IGAs designed to strengthen the financial autonomy of families. This holistic approach aims to reduce the financial desperation that often forces youth to drop out of school prematurely.

- Teacher Training: Recognising that low educational quality is a driver of school dropout, the programme incorporates teacher training to improve instructional standards and student retention.

### *Target Demographics and Geographic Reach*

The project has a significant operational scale and prioritises regions that have historically been underserved or heavily impacted by conflict:

- Reach: The programme is expected to reach approximately 21,500 students.
- Infrastructure: Interventions are spread across 50 schools.
- Geographic Focus: The programme operates in five specific sub-prefectures: Berberati, Gamboula, Sosso Nakombo, Dé-dé Mokouba, and Carnot.

By combining basic education, vocational skill-building, and economic support for families, the AFD's Education for All programme acts as a vital tool for human capital development, aiming to break the cycle of poverty and exclusion that characterizes youth unemployment in CAR.

## Initiative Pour l'Autonomisation de la Jeunesse (IPAJ)

The Initiative Pour l'Autonomisation de la Jeunesse (IPAJ)—translated as the Initiative for Youth Empowerment—is a development project in the Central African Republic (CAR) designed to tackle youth unemployment by improving employability and reducing gender inequalities. Launched officially on 27 March 2024, the project is co-financed by the French Development Agency (AFD) and the European Union (EU), and is implemented by the European Institute for Cooperation and Development (IECD).

### *Core Mission and Focus Areas*

The primary aim of IPAJ is to empower young people and strengthen the local economic context in Bangui and its surrounding areas through three key pillars:

- Education: Providing foundational learning opportunities.
- Vocational Training: Delivering high-quality technical instruction that meets the expectations of local employers.
- Support for Entrepreneurship: Assisting youth in launching and maintaining their own business activities.

### *Targeting and Demographic Focus*

The project specifically addresses the needs of young people aged between 18 and 30 who have either dropped out of school or are currently enrolled in vocational training centres supported by the IECD.

A central feature of the initiative is its focus on young women. It seeks to break gender stereotypes by training women for lucrative, traditionally male-dominated sectors, such as construction and public works. The project also provides support for very small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and market garden producers to help maintain and create new jobs.

### *Strategic Objectives and Targets*

The IPAJ project operates with a timeline extending to December 2027 and has set specific quantitative targets for its comprehensive training-to-integration pathway:

- Pre-training: Reaching 1,075 young people, with a target of 50% women.
- Vocational Training: Providing skills to 1,200 young people, with a target of 30% women.
- Socio-professional Integration: Supporting 800 young people into self-employment, with a target of 50% women.

By combining technical and human training with awareness-raising activities, the initiative aims to transform beneficiaries into responsible economic actors who can contribute to social cohesion and national stability.

## Multilateral Initiatives

# E KPENGBA

E KPENGBA, known formally as the Local Governance and Community Resilience Project, is a US$90 million World Bank-financed initiative in the Central African Republic (CAR) that serves as the direct successor to the LONDO and LONDO+ projects. The project is designed to address the structural causes of fragility by building local capacity for citizen-responsive service delivery and providing socio-economic support to communities, with a specific focus on mitigating the vulnerabilities that lead to youth unemployment and recruitment into armed groups.

### *Strategic Successor to LONDO*

The project was approved in August 2023 and became the primary vehicle for community resilience. It effectively integrates approximately US$17 million in leftover resources from its predecessor to complete public works in regions that were previously inaccessible due to conflict. By building on the established operational lessons of the LONDO model, E KPENGBA continues to use Labour-Intensive Public Works (THIMO/LIPW) as a core mechanism for immediate job creation.

### *Impact on Youth Unemployment and Reintegration*

The project directly addresses the demographic bulge in CAR, where 75% of the population is under 35, by providing viable economic alternatives to violence. Its relevance to the youth labor market is structured around three main pillars:

- Reintegration of Ex-Combatants: The project provides specific socio-economic support to facilitate the reconciliation and reintegration of former fighters—many of whom are young men—back into their communities.
- Temporary Employment via THIMO: Through labour-based rehabilitation of access roads, small irrigation systems, and water catchments, the project provides manual labour opportunities that offer immediate daily wages to vulnerable youth.
- Income-Generating Infrastructure: The project delivers climate-resilient community assets, such as markets and food storage facilities, which are intended to generate long-term income for both the local population and authorities.

### *Targeted Geographic and Demographic Inclusion*

Implemented by the Ministry of Economy, Planning and International Cooperation (MEPCI), E KPENGBA focuses on four vulnerable prefectures that have historically received limited support: Lobaye, Basse-Kotto, Vakaga, and Mbomou. The project includes strategic targeting to ensure the inclusion of marginalised groups, including women, disabled individuals, and indigenous populations like the Ba-Aka in the Lobaye prefecture, ensuring they are not excluded from the project's livelihood benefits.

### *Current Operational Status*

As of 2025 and 2026, the project is in an active execution phase, with major procurement contracts launched for heavy vehicles and 12 compactors to support community-led physical reconstruction. Beyond basic employment, the project is designed to act as a Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus intervention by pairing daily wages with mandatory savings mechanisms and business start-up toolkits to help youth transition into sustainable self-employment.

# Adaptive and Productive Social Safety Nets Project

The Adaptive and Productive Social Safety Nets Project (officially registered as project P179211) is a US$30 million World Bank-financed initiative approved in May 2024 to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable populations in the Central African Republic (CAR). While its primary mechanism is the provision of direct social protection, it is strategically designed to address the root causes of youth unemployment and vulnerability by stabilising households and investing in human capital.

### *Core Objectives and Mechanism*

The project's central mission is to scale up social protection for poor families while improving the "shock-responsiveness" of national delivery systems. Its operations include:

- Direct Cash Transfers: Approximately 45,000 households receive regular safety net transfers to mitigate extreme poverty.
- Human Capital Training: Beyond financial aid, the project provides specific training aimed at strengthening the skills and health of beneficiaries, preparing them to respond better to climate and economic shocks.
- Stabilisation and Conflict Prevention: By providing a reliable economic floor, the project seeks to strengthen the "social contract" and stabilise communities that have been historically marginalised.

The project is a critical component of the World Bank's broader strategy to break the "conflict trap" that captures Central African youth. Its relevance to the youth labour market is established through several channels:

- Deterrent to Armed Recruitment: The sources highlight that 75% of CAR's population is under 35, and the acute lack of economic opportunity makes unemployed youth primary targets for recruitment by armed groups. By stabilizing household incomes, the project reduces the financial desperation that often drives young men to join militias for survival.
- Human Capital Investment: With 60% of youth currently out of school, the project's focus on human capital—specifically through training and empowering the most vulnerable—is designed to equip the next generation with the foundational stability needed for better health, education, and future productivity.
- Economic Diversification: The project specifically aims to build resilience against environmental and security shocks. By diversifying family incomes, it reduces a household's total dependence on a single, often male-dominated and climate-vulnerable sector, which structurally reduces the susceptibility of the younger members to enlistment in rebel groups.

### *Targeted Regions and Scale-up*

The project is implemented in regions with the highest poverty incidence and climate vulnerability:

- Initial Focus: The Kagas and Haut-Oubangui regions, which have poverty rates of 78.6% and 84.65% respectively.
- Implementation Strategy: Work begins in the most accessible communes to ensure immediate stabilization before expanding.
- Scale-up (2025–2026): In late 2025 and early 2026, the project was scaled up with Additional Financing specifically targeting host communities and refugees along the volatile Eastern borders, where dwindling humanitarian aid threatened to spark new resource-based conflicts.

Through these efforts, the Adaptive and Productive Social Safety Nets Project acts as a Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus intervention, using social protection as a tool to improve the long-term employability and security of Central African youth.

## Educational Technology (EdTech) and Accelerated Learning

Accelerated Learning Programmes (ALP) and Educational Technology (EdTech) have emerged as vital "curative" strategies to address the fact that approximately 660,000 youth (60% of the 15–24 age cohort) are currently out of school. These initiatives seek to provide second-chance opportunities for youth who missed years of instruction due to prolonged conflict, thereby reducing their vulnerability to recruitment by armed groups and improving their long-term employability.

### *The Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP)*

The Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP) is a compressed educational framework designed to help out-of-school children and youth (re)integrate into the formal school system.

- Mechanism: The ALP enables students to complete six years of primary education within just three years through a condensed curriculum.
- Reach and Results: Initially piloted under the Emergency Basic Education Project (EBESP), the programme has reached over 7,000 out-of-school children using rehabilitated classrooms and specialized teacher training.
- National Scaling: Following these promising results, the Education Sector Plan Support Project (ESPSP) aims to scale the ALP nationwide to reach more disenfranchised children.

### *EdTech and Interactive Audio Instruction (IAI)*

A significant barrier to the success of accelerated learning in CAR is that teachers often lack the specialised training required for learner-centred instruction. To solve this, the World Bank and the Mastercard Foundation funded a grant (TF0C2241) to explore Interactive Audio Instruction (IAI).

- Defining IAI: IAI is a low-cost EdTech solution that delivers scripted, engaging lessons via radio, MP3 players, or mobile phones. These lessons combine songs, stories, and games to guide students through the curriculum.
- Teacher Coaching: A unique feature of IAI is that it coaches teachers in real-time, modelling interactive pedagogy while the lesson is in progress. This is particularly valuable in CAR's low-capacity context where many instructors are underqualified.
- Contextual Adaptation: During the grant period (2023–2025), eight IAI lessons were co-created for ALP Level 3 (Grades 5–6) in French and Mathematics, featuring culturally relevant content and songs.

The integration of EdTech and accelerated learning is strategically linked to CAR's labour market challenges:

- Foundation for Productivity: The sources indicate that education in CAR is positively correlated with higher wage earnings and stable contract employment. By fast-tracking basic literacy and numeracy, ALP and IAI equip youth with the foundational skills needed for productive self-employment or entry into the formal sector.
- Breaking the Conflict Trap: Unemployed and uneducated youth are the primary targets for recruitment by non-state armed groups. Programmes like ALP offer a "second chance" that provides a viable economic alternative to violence.
- Resilience to Shocks: The development of a resilient hybrid learning model using EdTech is intended to ensure that education can continue even during future security disruptions or climate-related shocks that might otherwise force schools to close.

Despite the potential of these programmes, implementation remains challenged by a severe shortage of technical trainers (who make up only 1.67% of the pedagogical workforce) and the fact that 80% of vocational facilities lack basic materials like water and electricity. Moving forward, experts recommend embedding IAI

into permanent teacher professional development and expanding the ALP to include remedial education paired with specific skills training geared toward local market demands.

## Community Violence Reduction (CVR) Programme

The Community Violence Reduction (CVR) programme is a flexible, bottom-up initiative in the Central African Republic (CAR) designed to provide economic alternatives to high-risk populations, particularly as a strategy to combat youth unemployment and recruitment into armed groups.

Operated by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), the programme acts as an alternative to traditional Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration (DDR) frameworks for those who do not meet the legal criteria for the national programme.

### *Strategic Targeting of High-Risk Youth*

The CVR programme specifically targets the most vulnerable demographics in conflict hotspots, including Bimbo, Kaga-Bandoro, Bria, Bambari, Bouar, Ndele, Birao, and Bangassou. The core groups identified for participation include:

- High-risk youth who are susceptible to manipulation by militias due to a lack of economic opportunity.
- Community members prone to violence.
- Combatants excluded from the National DDRR Programme (PNDDRR).

### *Economic and Behavioral Transformation*

The CVR model integrates immediate economic relief with long-term skill acquisition and social integration:

- Vocational Training: Beneficiaries undergo rapid, three-month vocational training in practical trades such as carpentry, tailoring, masonry, mechanics, and agro-pastoral farming.
- Soft Skills: Training is paired with mandatory courses in civic education, citizenship, and conflict resolution to counter violent extremism and encourage peaceful integration.
- Post-Training Support: Graduation from the programme often includes the provision of start-up kits for Income-Generating Activities (IGAs) to ensure immediate financial independence.

### *Results and Impact*

Since its launch in 2016, the programme has achieved significant results in stabilising communities:

- Participation: It has supported 22,337 active participants, including 6,503 women.
- Security: The programme has successfully facilitated the collection of 14,145 weapons.
- Adaptability: During the pandemic, youth cooperatives within the programme produced over 120,000 face masks and 105,000 soaps, demonstrating their ability to support local public health needs while earning a livelihood.

A notable success story is Brice Nzambé, a tailor living with a disability in Bimbo. After graduating from the CVR tailoring programme in 2023, he established a shop that now employs five apprentices, illustrating how localised vocational interventions can drive long-term community integration and employment.

### *Collaborating Partners*

The programme is implemented by MINUSCA in close coordination with several multilateral and non-governmental entities to ensure its reach and effectiveness:

- UN Agencies: United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

- International NGOs: Projects like the EU-funded "Youth for Peace" initiative, implemented by DanChurchAid (DCA), work alongside national DDR structures to support community reintegration and violence reduction.

## Support Programme for Reconstruction of Grassroots Communities (PARCB-2)

The Support Programme for Reconstruction of Grassroots Communities – Phase 2, known as PARCB-2 (*Projet d'Appui à la Reconstruction des Communautés de Base – Phase 2*), is a landmark initiative launched by the government of the Central African Republic (CAR) in partnership with the African Development Bank (AfDB) Group. Originally approved in September 2023 with an initial grant of €12.62 million from the Transition Support Facility, the programme was scaled up to a total of $113 million by late 2025.

The project is designed to rebuild livelihoods and drive sustainable economic recovery in regions severely affected by the country's political and military crises.

The PARCB-2 programme identifies youth engagement as a core pillar of its strategy, recognising that CAR's large young population offers significant potential for innovation and national growth. Its impact on youth unemployment is structured through several specific mechanisms:

- Vocational Training and Integration: The programme provides targeted vocational training and employment support for nearly 5,000 unemployed young people aged 15 to 25. The goal is to ensure their long-term socio-economic reintegration into the labour market.
- Job Creation: Overall, PARCB-2 aims to stimulate the creation of 9,500 jobs. These salaried positions are expected to arise from income-generating activities launched by beneficiaries during and after the project implementation phase.
- Targeting High-Growth Sectors: To drive employment, the project focuses on rapid-impact activities in agriculture, livestock, crafts, and mining. Specifically, it supports value chains in poultry farming, fish farming, beekeeping, and dairy production.
- Deterrence of Armed Recruitment: By providing viable economic alternatives and restoring social cohesion, the programme explicitly seeks to prevent young people from being manipulated or enlisted into armed groups.
- Academic Infrastructure: As a symbolic start to the programme, President Faustin-Archange Touadéra laid the foundation stone for a new teaching facility at the Faculty of Economics and Management at the University of Bangui, highlighting a commitment to investing in human capital.

### *Target Regions and Beneficiaries*

PARCB-2 expands upon the achievements of its first phase to reach 800,000 direct beneficiaries across four key regions:

- Bangui (the capital city).
- Ouaka.
- Haute-Kotto.
- Basse-Kotto.

These prefectures were selected because their populations have been heavily impacted by conflict and have historically received less support from development partners. Women represent 51% of the direct beneficiaries.

### *Core Programme Components*

The programme is implemented by the CAR government with joint parallel funding of $5 million from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and is divided into three components:

1. Support for Resilient Socio-economic Activities: Focuses on community stabilisation, social cohesion, and the reintegration of at least 3,500 former combatants and vulnerable youth.
2. Capacity Building: Strengthening the ability of national and local institutions to deliver high-quality basic social services.
3. Programme Management: Overseeing the execution and sustainability of the initiative.

Additionally, $8 million of the total budget is dedicated to climate finance, aimed at reinforcing community resilience and adaptation to environmental shocks.

## The Bêkou Trust Fund

The Bêkou Trust Fund, established in July 2014 by the European Union as its first multi-donor trust fund, is a central instrument for addressing fragility in the Central African Republic (CAR). Its name, meaning "Hope" in Sango, reflects its mission to act as a Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus intervention, bridging the gap between immediate emergency relief and long-term socio-economic recovery.

### *Strategic Focus on Youth and Reconciliation*

The second phase of the fund's reconciliation programme, adopted in April 2020, introduced a dedicated focus on youth. Recognising that young people comprise 70% of the population, the fund views them as essential stakeholders for sustainable peace. A specific project launched under this phase aims to revitalise youth centres across the country by:

- Strengthening Human Resources: Facilitating the recruitment and training of facilitators.
- Improving Governance: Supporting the establishment of management committees and general assemblies.
- Operational Support: Assisting in the creation of action plans and supporting the activities of the Ministry of Youth and the National Youth Council.

### *Economic Empowerment and Returnee Reintegration*

The fund has allocated nearly €23 million to social cohesion and reconciliation themes, much of which directly impacts youth through the support of return dynamics for refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs).

- Labour-Intensive Public Works (LIT/THIMO): Projects like *Doni Kiringo na kodor* have used labour-intensive work to provide immediate, temporary employment to displaced youth in Bangui, offering a financial alternative to militia recruitment.
- Income-Generating Activities (IGA): Graduates of these programmes receive support to launch small businesses, providing a pathway to self-employment in a country where 84% of the active youth labor force operates in the informal sector.
- Vocational Training: Various projects integrate short-term vocational training to equip young returnees with practical skills for the local market.

### *Synergy with National Policy*

The Bêkou Fund's objectives are explicitly aligned with the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan (RCPCA). Specifically, it supports the RCPCA's first pillar, which focuses on peace, security, and reconciliation, by funding projects that restore social contracts at the community level. For instance, it has supported the establishment of 24 Local Peace and Reconciliation Committees and provided sensitisation on "living together" to over 51,000 people.

### *Multi-Donor Support and Reach*

As of current reporting, the fund has mobilised over €310 million from contributors including the European Union, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. Its cross-cutting approach ensures that even projects focused on rural development or health include activities designed to renew social links and provide economic opportunities for marginalised groups, including women and high-risk youth. Since its inception, the fund's peacebuilding and conflict prevention activities have reached approximately 121,000 beneficiaries.

## The RELSUDE Programme

The Socio-Economic Stabilisation (RELSUDE) programme is an initiative focusing on the south-eastern zone of the CAR. It aims to improve access to primary services and enhance vocational skills to provide youth with sustainable livelihood alternatives in unstable regions.

The Socio-Economic Stabilization programme, known as RELSUDE, is a developmental intervention in the Central African Republic (CAR) primarily financed by the Bêkou Trust Fund. As a project within the European Union's multi-donor fund, it operates at the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus, designed to transition communities from emergency relief toward sustainable socio-economic recovery.

### *Relevance to Youth Unemployment and Skills*

The RELSUDE programme addresses the challenges of youth unemployment—which affects a population where 75% are under the age of 35—through several strategic channels:

- Vocational Training: A core objective of the programme is the improvement of vocational skills. By providing practical training, RELSUDE seeks to provide out-of-school youth with the qualifications necessary to enter the labour market, thereby reducing their vulnerability to recruitment by armed groups.
- Support for Primary Services: The programme also focuses on revitalising primary services in conflict-affected zones, which helps create a more stable environment for local economic activity and self-employment.
- Engagement through Media: RELSUDE provides strong support for local radio stations. In the context of CAR, radio is a vital tool for providing objective information and promoting dialogue, which serves to counter the feelings of marginalisation that often drive youth toward violence.

### *Geographic and Strategic Context*

There are varying reports on the programme's specific geographic focus, with sources noting its implementation in both the Southeastern zone and the south-west of the country. Regardless of the specific location, the programme is strategically aligned with the first pillar of the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan (RCPCA), which prioritises peace and reconciliation through inclusive economic growth and the renewal of the social contract.

By integrating vocational training with community-level stabilisation, RELSUDE acts as a curative strategy for the estimated 660,000 youth who are currently out of school and lack the foundational skills needed for productive employment.

## Kiri Ngo Na Kodro (Return to the Community)

Kiri Ngo Na Kodro, which translates from Sango as "Return to the Community," is a significant peacebuilding and socio-economic intervention in the Central African Republic (CAR) primarily financed by the European Union's Bêkou Trust Fund. Launched in November 2018, the project is designed to support the sustainable

return and reintegration of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) through a multi-sectoral approach that bridges the gap between humanitarian aid and long-term development.

The project's relevance to the issue of youth unemployment is structured through the following strategic pillars:

### *Economic Empowerment and Vocational Training*

A central objective of Kiri Ngo Na Kodro is to provide returnees, a demographic heavily composed of young people, with the means to achieve financial independence. The project achieves this through:

- Vocational Training: It offers short-term technical instruction to equip out-of-school youth with practical skills suited for local markets.
- Support for Income-Generating Activities (IGAs): Beyond training, the project provides the necessary support for beneficiaries to launch small businesses, offering a viable alternative to the informal, low-productivity labour that characterises 84% of the active youth workforce.
- Agropastoral Value Chains: In alignment with CAR's agricultural potential, the project supports youth integration into productive sectors like farming and livestock, which are vital for rural economic recovery.

### *Labour-Intensive Public Works (LIT/THIMO)*

The project utilizes Labour-Intensive Public Works, known by the French acronym THIMO (*Travaux à Haute Intensité de Main-d'œuvre*), to provide immediate, temporary employment. For young returnees who may have missed years of formal education due to conflict, these programmes offer:

- Immediate Income: Daily wages that mitigate the extreme poverty affecting 71% of the population.
- Deterrence from Armed Groups: By providing a structured financial alternative, the project reduces the "recruitment pool" for non-state armed groups and militias, for whom unemployed and disenfranchised youth are primary targets.

### *Social Cohesion and Conflict Prevention*

Kiri Ngo Na Kodro is unique because it initiates the reintegration process within refugee camps in Cameroon before the youth even return to CAR, preparing them for peaceful coexistence.

- Trauma Counselling: Recognizing the psychological impact of conflict, the project integrates psychosocial support to help youth recover from trauma and rebuild community trust.
- Peace Committees: It supports the establishment of local mechanisms for conflict resolution, ensuring that youth are viewed as peacebuilding stakeholders rather than security threats.

### *Governance and Implementation*

The project is led by a consortium comprising Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Aegis Trust, the Platform of Religious Confessions in CAR (PCRC), and World Vision. Its activities are closely aligned with the first pillar of the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan (RCPCA), which prioritises peace, security, and the renewal of the social contract.

By combining immediate economic relief through public works with long-term skill acquisition, Kiri Ngo Na Kodro serves as a curative strategy for the estimated 660,000 out-of-school youth who are currently excluded from the formal economy.

## International Initiatives Worth Considering

# World Bank

The World Bank is the largest funder of youth employment and rural livelihoods programming.

### 1. Jobs and Economic Transformation Projects

- Rural road construction (labour-intensive public works)
- Agribusiness development
- SME finance facilities
- Vocational training systems

### 2. Youth Employment and Skills Projects

- Youth training + apprenticeship schemes
- Entrepreneurship incubation
- Digital skills programmes

This approach seeks to combine skills, infrastructure and private sector development

International Labour Organization (ILO)

ILO focuses on labour market systems rather than just job creation.

Key programmes include:

### 1. Youth Employment Programme (YEP)

- Skills training aligned with employer demand
- Apprenticeship system development
- Labour market policy reform

### 2. School-to-Work Transition Programmes

- Career counselling
- Work placement systems
- Vocational pathway structuring

The key premise here is to fix the transition from education to tangible employment, not just increasing training supply.

# United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

UNDP focuses heavily on youth livelihoods in fragile and post-conflict settings.

Typical interventions:

- Cash-for-work programmes
- Youth entrepreneurship grants
- Post-conflict reintegration training
- Local economic development (LED) programmes

Strong focus:

- Ex-combatants
- At-risk youth in fragile states
- Community stabilisation through employment

## African Development Bank (AfDB)

***ENABLE Youth***

Focus:

- Agribusiness entrepreneurship for youth

Components:

- Access to land
- Business incubation hubs
- Credit facilities
- Mentorship networks

This programme's key premise is to make agriculture, as a vocation, seem more attractive; if agriculture is made to be profitable, youth will choose it voluntarily.

## International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

IFAD is one of the most important rural youth employment actors.

Programme focus:

- Rural youth agripreneurship
- Value chain integration (coffee, cocoa, dairy, livestock)
- Rural finance access
- Youth-inclusive cooperatives

## UNICEF

Although primarily a child-focused agency, UNICEF works on:

- Adolescent skills development
- Life skills education
- Transition-to-work programmes in fragile states
- Youth employment in humanitarian settings

### Government Programmes

The Government of the Central African Republic has integrated youth employment into its peacebuilding strategies. The primary domestic roadmaps include the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan (RCPCA) and the National Employment and Vocational Training Policy Framework Document. These seek to restore social cohesion by prioritising job creation and skills development. Additionally, the National Strategy for Technical

and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) attempts to unify a fragmented sector to better align instruction with the productive economy.

## National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan (RCPCA)

The RCPCA identifies youth inclusion as a critical "cross-cutting objective" essential to addressing the drivers of fragility, conflict, and violence in CAR. Its relevance to the issue of youth unemployment is multifaceted:

- Deterrent to Armed Recruitment: The plan recognises that the acute lack of economic opportunities and stable livelihoods makes unemployed youth primary targets for recruitment by non-state armed groups and militias. By prioritising job creation, the RCPCA aims to break this "conflict trap".
- Strategic Foundation for Skills Training: The RCPCA serves as the overarching strategic umbrella for other major policies, such as the National Employment and Vocational Training Policy Framework Document. These sub-policies specifically target skills development for vulnerable, uneducated, and conflict-affected youth to facilitate their entry into productive sectors.
- Promotion of Labour-Intensive Works: Under the RCPCA, the government and its partners have prioritised Labour-Intensive Public Works (THIMO) programmes. These initiatives provide immediate, temporary employment to youth—irrespective of their educational background—to enhance social cohesion and reduce the financial incentives offered by rebel groups.
- International Coordination: The plan provides a unified framework for international donors. For example, the EU's Bêkou Fund explicitly aligns its reconciliation and economic empowerment projects with the first pillar of the RCPCA to ensure all interventions support a singular national peacebuilding vision.

### *Challenges and Criticisms*

While the RCPCA is a vital roadmap, the sources point to several factors that have limited its impact on youth unemployment:

- Limited Youth Participation: Experts have noted that several youth organisations were not adequately represented at the initial Brussels donors' conference. This has led to concerns that the stabilisation plan is not fully "owned" by the youth, who may struggle to implement programmes they did not help design.
- The Insecurity Barrier: The ongoing inability to provide security in remote regions remains a major "stumbling block". In areas still controlled by armed groups, the government cannot restore state authority or implement the peacebuilding and employment programmes envisioned in the RCPCA.
- Funding and Infrastructure Gaps: Despite the pledges, the state remains severely restricted by a lack of capital investment capacity. This makes it difficult to rebuild destroyed provincial vocational training infrastructure, leaving the majority of youth in rural areas without the means to acquire the skills the RCPCA promotes.

## National Employment and Vocational Training Policy Framework Document

The National Employment and Vocational Training Policy Framework Document, also known by its French acronym PNEFP (*Politique Nationale de l'Emploi et de la Formation Professionnelle*), was adopted in 2016 to serve as a strategic roadmap for restoring social cohesion and driving job creation in a labour market deeply fractured by recurrent security crises.

Developed with technical assistance from the International Labour Organization (ILO), the PNEFP specifically addresses the "structural underemployment" and high inactivity rates that characterise the Central African youth population.

### *Core Focus on Social Inclusion*

A central principle of the PNEFP is the social inclusion of vulnerable groups. Regarding youth unemployment, the policy explicitly targets the following cohorts:

- Young men and women with little or no schooling or poor qualifications.
- Demobilised young soldiers and those formerly associated with armed groups.
- Displaced youth and refugees returning to CAR.
- The long-term unemployed.

### *Strategic Objectives for Youth*

The national authorities recognise within the PNEFP that skills development for young people is a critical prerequisite for national stability. The document outlines four primary benefits of prioritising youth in this framework:

- Providing Qualifications: It seeks to offer formal certification and skills training to youth who have been victims of vulnerability and poverty, often missing out on the mainstream education system.
- Socio-professional Integration: The goal is to facilitate entry into the labour market, either through direct recruitment into existing businesses or by supporting the creation of self-employment and individual entrepreneurial activities.
- Reducing Violence and Insecurity: By providing economic alternatives, the policy aims to reduce the "recruitment pool" for armed groups, for whom unemployed youth are the primary targets.
- Community Integration: It promotes the integration of migrant families and youth who have lived in CAR for generations into the broader community through shared economic opportunity.

### *Implementation and Bottlenecks*

While the PNEFP provides a robust strategic vision, the sources indicate that it faces significant systemic vulnerabilities. The policy is currently hindered by a lack of operational integration with the national budget and is largely "paralysed" by weak administrative execution.

Furthermore, because the Central African Agency for Vocational Training and Employment (ACFPE)—the agency responsible for implementing such training—is funded by a 2% payroll tax on formal businesses, the narrowness of CAR's formal economy means there is often insufficient internal revenue to fund the PNEFP's ambitious reach into provincial territories. Consequently, many of the training and integration activities envisioned in the document are currently assumed by international NGOs on an ad-hoc basis rather than through a sustainable, state-led system.

## National Strategy for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

The National Strategy for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), known in French as the *Stratégie Nationale de l'Enseignement Technique et de la Formation Professionnelle en Centrafrique*, was established as a 2018 roadmap to provide a unified strategic direction for skills development in the Central African Republic (CAR). Its primary purpose is to consolidate a fragmented vocational training sector into a single framework for action, ensuring that interventions from state agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and private operators are harmonised.

### *Governance and Structural Framework*

The TVET system operates under a tripartite governance model involving three distinct levels:

- The Higher Council of Employment and Vocational Training.
- The Permanent Council of Administrative Reform.

- The Central African Agency for Vocational Training and Employment (ACFPE): This is the operational public service responsible for matching job supply and demand, managing vocational training funds, and conducting human resource surveys.

The strategy organises training into two primary cycles at the secondary level. The lower cycle lasts three years and provides either a Technical Aptitude Certificate (*Certificat d'Aptitude Technique*) or Vocational Training Studies (*Brevet d'Étude technique*). The upper cycle also spans three years, offering a Technical Baccalaureate for those reaching grade 11 or a Professional Baccalaureate for those with a Technical Aptitude Certificate.

### *Objectives for Youth and Social Inclusion*

The TVET strategy is specifically designed to address the "systemic issue" of out-of-school youth by refining tasks linked to vocational training to ensure inclusive education. It seeks to provide:

- Equal Access: Ensuring that marginalised groups, including women, rural workers, and migrants, have equal opportunities to access training facilities.
- Disarmament and Reintegration: Serving as a vital component for Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration (DDR) programmes by providing qualifications to former combatants.
- Qualification of the Workforce: Offering formal certification to the "recruitment pool" of unemployed youth to reduce their susceptibility to enlistment by armed groups.

### *Systemic Challenges and Reforms*

While the strategy provides a single intervention framework, its implementation is hindered by severe domestic bottlenecks. Only nine public TVET facilities remain operational, and all are concentrated in Bangui, leaving the provincial centres in cities like Bambari and Bossangoa non-functional due to past looting and destruction. Furthermore, there is a massive imbalance in human resources; technical trainers constitute only 1.67% of the total pedagogical workforce, and many existing instructors are underqualified or near retirement.

The strategy also aims to reform the funding mechanism. Currently, vocational training is almost entirely financed by a 2% payroll tax levied on formal private sector businesses. Because CAR's formal economy is extremely small, this tax base is insufficient to fund the ambitious expansion of training centres into rural territories. To bridge this gap, the strategy proposes greater involvement of social partners and the private sector to develop sustainable finance mechanisms and ensure that training curricula align with actual market demands.

## Central African Agency for Vocational Training and Employment (ACFPE)

The Central African Agency for Vocational Training and Employment (ACFPE) serves as the principal public employment service. Governed by a tripartite board, its primary funding mechanism is a 2% payroll tax levied on formal enterprises. However, the small formal economy limits this tax base, leaving the agency chronically underfunded. Consequently, its operational reach is largely restricted to Bangui, leaving the provincial populations effectively underserved.

### *Core Mandate and Functions*

The ACFPE is a multi-faceted public institution with four primary roles: it acts as a public employment agency, a training and employment observatory, a provider of vocational training, and the manager of the national vocational training fund. Its specific objectives include:

- Labour Market Brokerage: Matching job supply with demand by identifying the needs of companies and helping job seekers enter the market.
- Observatory Role: Collecting and disseminating information and documentation on vocational training and conducting human resource surveys across the public and private sectors.

- Skills Development: Developing training plans for businesses and organising refresher courses for employees to strengthen the capacity of human resources.
- Certification: Delivering official certificates of competency to trainees who complete short vocational training courses.

### *Governance and Funding*

The agency operates under a tripartite governance model intended to reflect a social dialogue between the state and the workforce. Its board of directors comprises five members: two private sector representatives, two labour union representatives, and one government representative.

Its operations are legally financed through a mandatory 2% payroll tax levied on formal private sector enterprises, which is paid directly into the ACFPE budget. This funding mechanism is intended to create a direct link between the needs of the private sector and the training provided.

### *Operational Infrastructure*

The ACFPE manages a network of 159 vocational training centres, which are heavily concentrated in the metropolitan area of Bangui and towns in the west of the country. While the agency is mandated to serve the entire nation, many of its provincial centres—such as those in Berbérati, Bossangoa, and Bambari—currently exist only in name due to looting and destruction during the 2013 crisis.

### *Systemic Challenges and Vulnerabilities*

Despite its broad mandate, the ACFPE faces significant hurdles that limit its impact on youth unemployment:

- Funding Constraints: Because its budget depends on a payroll tax from the formal economy, the tiny size of CAR's formal private sector leaves the agency severely underfunded.
- Conflict of Interest: The agency serves as both the funder and the service provider for training, which some experts note could lead to internal conflicts.
- Institutional Overlap: Coordination is often hampered by overlapping mandates with other bodies, such as the Ministry of Technical and Vocational Education, which manages formal technical high schools.
- Geographic Exclusion: The lack of physical operations outside Bangui means that the majority of youth in rural areas remain excluded from its state-led training programmes.
- Outdated Curricula: Due to a lack of regular updates to occupational directories, many of the training modules focus on obsolete trades while failing to organise emerging, high-demand sectors.

## Recommendations

### 1. Unification and Decentralisation of TVET Governance

The current administrative fragmentation between the Ministry of Technical and Vocational Education and the Ministry of Vocational Training, Trades and Crafts must be resolved to create a single cohesive framework for action.

- Consolidate Mandates: Merging these portfolios under a single administrative authority will eliminate redundant expenditures and allow for a functional National Labour Market Information System.
- Decentralise the ACFPE: The Central African Agency for Vocational Training and Employment (ACFPE) currently exists physically only in Bangui; it must establish branches in regional economic hubs to reach the majority of youth in provincial territories.
- Update Curricula: Existing vocational directories are obsolete; training modules should be redesigned in close partnership with the private sector to align with emerging, high-demand trades.

## 2. Formalising and Upgrading the Informal Economy

Recognising that formal wage employment is currently inaccessible to the vast majority, the state should focus on upgrading informal livelihoods.

- Sector-Specific Formalisation: High-potential sectors like the motorcycle taxi business and artisanal mining should be prioritised for formalisation through simplified registration processes, such as the "aspiring entrepreneur" status offered by the OHADA framework.
- Certify Informal Apprenticeships: The government should establish a national framework to support and certify apprenticeships under master craftsmen, providing official skill-testing recognition that grants informal workers labour market mobility and access to credit.
- Provide Integration Kits: Following the success of the LONDO model, temporary public works should always conclude with the provision of tools or "integration kits" (such as bicycles or trade equipment) to facilitate the transition into individual entrepreneurship.

## 3. Scaling Resilient Educational Technology (EdTech)

With 60% of youth currently out of school and a severe shortage of qualified technical trainers, CAR requires "curative" educational strategies that can bypass infrastructure deficits.

- Expand Interactive Audio Instruction (IAI): Low-cost EdTech solutions delivering scripted lessons via radio or mobile phones can improve basic literacy and numeracy while simultaneously coaching under-qualified teachers in real-time.
- Nationwide Accelerated Learning: The Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP) should be scaled to allow out-of-school youth to complete six years of primary education in three, paired with remedial vocational training geared toward local market demands.

## 4. Enhancing Financial Inclusion and Savings

Lack of capital and the absence of banking services in rural areas remain major impediments to youth productivity.

- Introduce Simplified Accounts: CAR should explore models similar to Angola's "Bankita" programme, where the central bank partners with commercial banks to offer simplified, no-fee accounts with minimal ID requirements to the unbanked population.
- Promote Mobile Money: Developing a robust mobile money infrastructure can accelerate financial inclusion and provide a transparent platform for the payment of daily wages in public works projects.
- Mandatory Savings Mechanisms: Projects like E KPENGBA and LONDO should incorporate mandatory savings where a portion of project wages is channelled into micro-savings accounts, matched with start-up grants upon project graduation.

## 5. Addressing Gender and Regional Disparities

Gender exclusion acts as a structural driver of conflict; therefore, interventions must specifically target young women to diversify household income.

- Gender-Transformative Training: Young women, who face a 70% out-of-school rate, should be actively recruited into resilient and high-yield sectors like construction and public works to break gender stereotypes and reduce household vulnerability to economic shocks.
- Support for Returnees: Reintegration programmes like *Kiri Ngo Na Kodro* must continue to bridge the gap between humanitarian aid and development by providing young returnees and refugees with psychosocial support alongside vocational skills.

## 6. Public Finance Reform to Secure Sustainability

To reduce the absolute dependence on external aid, the state must create domestic fiscal space for youth investment.

- Broaden the Tax Base: Modernising tax administration through digital platforms and capturing domestic revenues from the forestry and mining sectors is essential.
- Reallocate Resources: Reducing the public sector wage bill, which currently absorbs nearly 73% of domestic resources, would allow the state to fund its own technical training centres and hire qualified instructors.