

## CONCEPT NOTE – FSD CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

### Community livelihood activities in support of sustainable development in conflict affected regions of Central African Republic



*FSD providing material and classroom facilities in Bouar for production of handmade masks, providing protection and economic livelihood opportunities to local women.*

## Sustainable Development in the Central African Republic

A vast landlocked country of 623,000 km<sup>2</sup>, at the heart of the African continent and sparsely populated with 5.189 million inhabitants in 2018, the Central African Republic (CAR) has enormous potential in natural resources but paradoxically remains very poor. It has been subject to several decades of recurrent military-political conflicts, leading to large population movements over the past five years. In addition to this baseline, there are many other factors which present as obstacles to stabilisation in the country such as; proliferation of weapons and small arms ammunition, widespread unemployment and a lack of opportunities for young adults, inequality and armed violence affecting women and children disproportionately, and chronic corruption and a lack of transparency in governance.

### Planned Intervention

FSD's activities in CAR mirror the demilitarisation, disarmament and rehabilitation approach with the commitments of the country to security sector reform; this is a cornerstone of the country's commitment to the 2019 Khartoum Peace Agreement. This manifests as FSD's teams being deployed in some of the most vulnerable and conflict-affected regions of the country; precisely those communities which need humanitarian and development aid the most.



*FSD working with families and community groups in Bouar*

### Objectives and Outcomes

The **overall objective** of FSD in the Central African Republic is to contribute to sustainable development and regional stability in conflict affected areas, in order to allow the country to achieve its obligations and goals under the National Recovery and Consolidation of Peace Plan (RCPCA) and the 2030 SDGs.

FSD's **specific objective** is to reinforce community development and sustainable livelihood programmes in order to contribute to CAR's national sustainable development objectives and to bring about enhanced security and safety to conflict-affected communities.

FSD proposes to achieve this through activities enshrined in the Sustainable Development Goals with the following complimentary and linked outcomes:

- Increasing community **social development** through provision of community facilities and education.
- Increasing **economic opportunities** through the provision of confidence and employment-building activities and skills training.
- Enhancing **social environments** to provide safe and secure space for communities to interact through collective projects, involvement of local community groups and engagement of local authorities in practical community-owned projects.

## Key Actions and Activities

FSD proposes to achieve its aims and objectives of this project through the following activities:

**Education courses in cooking and artisanal skills** (basic food and hygiene, basic woodwork, metal work, construction and sewing/clothes making etc.). FSD works with a number of community projects in the towns and villages where projects take place; a good example of this is the “St Kisito Espace Culturel” in Bouar. A number of donors support this important community centre and FSD helps to provide materials and equipment to students to allow them to learn important livelihood skills. This ranges from sewing and haberdashery courses for orphaned girls and unemployed women; employment skills courses, such as cooking classes and basic home repair skills; advice and support for unemployed young men and women to enter the job market and general basic education support for reading, language and mathematics.



*Working with the Youth Pioneer Corps to create employment opportunities*

**Support to the Jeunesse Pioneer National (JPN)** in materiel and management training; followed by employment and community maintenance projects. The Jeunesse Pioneer National Corps (JPN), provides a structured association for young members of society to develop, gain skills and learn crucial life skills as they mature from children to adults. This helps them realise their potential and avoid falling into life-long poverty traps, to access employment and add structure to their lives; commensurately there is direct effect on their families and immediate communities in social and economic development terms.

FSD has a formal agreement in place with local branches of the JPN to provide them employment within its projects along with an allowance; this

trains them in basic skills, gives them economic security and helps develop their leadership and management skills at an early age.

**Rehabilitation of family and community facilities** (such as crèches and community centres etc.). In many remote areas of CAR where FSD works, such as Bocouranga, Paoua, N’dele and others, there are no communal facilities. Providing such spaces allows communities to get together and discuss matters that affect them, and to better mitigate against negative factors such as food insecurity, criminal activity and economic and trade negotiations. Acting as a community group against such factors allows resilience, trust and a coherent community cooperation plan to develop. Such places can be used for community meetings, markets and community trade, local education courses, protection in extreme weather for those in vulnerable housing and to enable families and community groups to get together and form better social links.

**Rehabilitation of school facilities** (basic needs, equipment support, building rehabilitation, transportation etc.). The best way to promote the sustainable development is often considered to be through education; this recognises specifically that access to quality education is being denied to millions of children by increasingly protracted conflicts, forced displacement, violence, climate change and disasters. These factors are leaving behind lost generations of children and are the major root causes leading many to embark on perilous journeys to Europe and other regions of the world seeking a better life.

50% of children in conflict-affected countries are less likely to reach secondary school education, and the effect on girls is even more protracted with **2.5 times as many girls than boys not even attending primary school**. Health, learning and behaviour during a child's early years are foundational; not only for school success, but also for their capacity to contribute meaningfully to society.



*Women and children can be the most vulnerable members of society in conflict environments*

Children's growth and development is profoundly shaped by the educational, social and economic opportunities afforded to them in a range of contexts. Working with local communities to provide safe environments for learning and to rehabilitate basic classrooms, provide schooling materials and meals for school children are all simple activities that can dramatically improve levels of education for all children. Currently in CAR approximately 60 to 70% of children attend primary school and **only 15 to 20% of children attend secondary school**.

**Improvement to basic community utilities** in areas where FSD works (solar power, water access and street lighting etc.). UNDP's guide on community infrastructure rehabilitation explains that when governments and communities are supported by well-designed and timely interventions, both nations and communities are assisted to 'build back better'. This approach aims to build capacity within national and local institutions and facilitates partnerships between government, civil society, the private sector and local communities. This enables local social, institutional, economic and physical assets to be strengthened and made more disaster-resilient in the future.

Community infrastructure rehabilitation projects, if approached comprehensively, can support affected citizens to come together to rebuild their communities, strengthen partnerships with local authorities, reflect their own priorities in broader recovery and development planning and acquire new knowledge and skills that empower them to expand their opportunities and choices.

FSD provides a number of these projects working with local communities such as providing safe water to more homes and reducing the many hours spent, often by women and girls, collecting water for families. The World Bank records that less than 35% of the people living in CAR have access to electricity and lighting. FSD provides simple solar power solutions to communities to help mitigate this and also trains people in the maintenance and repair.

## About FSD

The Swiss Foundation for Mine Action is a non-governmental organisation that operates across a number of humanitarian and development fields in post-conflict environments; FSD was conceptualised in the humanitarian mine action sector, but has also diversified into many associated fields as needs arose over the last ten years. FSD was established in 1997 and has worked in over 30 countries worldwide for the last 22 years. The **overarching goal of FSD** is to promote sustainable development in conflict-affected countries through humanitarian operations and to contribute to regional stability and security in local communities; the entirety of its activities aims to alleviate and diminish the social, economic and environmental impacts of conflict, landmines, unexploded ordnance and environmental contamination worldwide. FSD currently works in Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Iraq, Philippines, Tajikistan and Ukraine.



*Providing water filters to improve the health of the local population*

FSD opened an office in Bangui in February 2014 with operations originally focussing on awareness and explosive risk education, and armed violence reduction campaigns. In 2015, FSD extended its activities in CAR within post-conflict recovery and stability, conducting specific disarmament, demobilisation and rehabilitation (DDR) and security sector reform (SSR) projects. This was with funding from UNDP for the rehabilitation of the Kassai military camp infrastructure in Bangui, and in 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 through two European Union funded projects for supporting the organization and the administration of the Central African Ministry of Defence.

In parallel, with funding from the UN Common Humanitarian Fund, FSD also implemented a project to reduce armed violence in Ouham Pende in the north-east of the country. In 2019-2021, FSD now implements two European Union funded projects supporting the continued stability of the security sector with administrative and logistic support to their deployment and a sustainable presence in Bangui and Bouar. This in turn contributes to the improvement of law and order and security, and the improvement of the day-to-day lives of vulnerable communities through social cohesion, early recovery and armed violence reduction programmes.

## Funding and Budget

Many of the management and administrative costs of FSD's programme in CAR are already covered by our larger institutional donors; this allows any additional private funding to be targeted directly at real results and making changes to peoples' lives in CAR. FSD estimates a budget of CHF 100,000 will allow projects to be launched in at least three to four major towns across CAR, starting in the second city, Bouar.

All contributions, of any size, will contribute to making a difference, and helping children and families have a more dignified life. The enclosed leaflet demonstrates some of the activities that funding can provide such as **CHF 20,000 will provide clean water to over 1,000 people**; CHF 5,000 would provide safe spaces and school facilities for 100 children; and **just CHF 200 can provide 30 young adults with basic skills for employment opportunities, education course and management training.**