NGO briefing to Member States:
Neglected Crises in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Central African Republic

On 11 July 2017 at the Palais Des Nations, Action Contre la Faim, INGO forum in DRC, Lutheran World Federation, Save the Children and CARE International presented to Member States on the neglected crises in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the Central African Republic (CAR).

Part of an ‘NGOs forward initiative’, NGO briefings to Member States are not intended to advocate for a specific policy position, but rather to highlight a diversity of NGO perspectives and views. The below provides a synthesis of key themes shared throughout the briefing.

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

- The DRC is facing an acute crisis impacting half of the country’s 26 provinces. One additional province reports severe humanitarian needs on average every two months.
- Approximately 7.7 million Congolese are affected as a result of insecurity and displacement. Nine months ago, 2 million IDPs were recorded. Three months ago, this figure rose to 3 million. Current data estimates that 3.8 million Congolese have now fled their home, with 1 in 3 from Kasaï provinces.
- The national economic situation in DRC continues to worsen. The national currency has lost over 2/3 of its value on the black market in the past year. Commodity prices in-country continue to soar, with a 50% increase in the national food basket.
- Protection issues are of severe concern:
  - The number of reported human rights violations continues to rise. The monthly average of confirmed extra judicial executions has nearly tripled in comparison to 2016 figures. Solely within Kasaï provinces, 3,300 violent deaths have been reported, with many more cases likely unreported.
  - Children continue to be recruited into armed groups and are victims of sexual violence.
- The breakdown of the epidemiological surveillance system has resulted in significant epidemiological risks. These risks are compounded as a large number of the displaced population are living in the bush, with no access to basic services and in highly insecure situations.
- Within the Kasaï provinces alone, statistics report:
  - 500 boys and girls have been utilized by militias as fighters and/or human shields
  - 600 cases of gender based violence since August 2016
  - 150,000 children deprived of education, with 646 attacks on schools and 200 injured children identified
  - 375 children separated from militias, with reported cases of “bewitchment”
  - 2,700 children in need of psychosocial support.
- Humanitarian Appeals for DRC are alarmingly under-funded: Despite the official humanitarian appeal representing only 3.5% of global appeals, support for DRC is alarmingly low, with an approximate 70% shortfall.

Response priorities

- The priorities in DRC are numerous. Top priorities shared by presenters include:
  - The urgent need for additional funding - USD641 million is required to meet immediate needs.
  - The current humanitarian leadership in DRC is insufficient to coordinate and implement a coherent response to the crises. Additional pressure is needed from Member States to strengthen in-country humanitarian leadership.
An increased focus on protection is urgently required, including a need to address current and emerging issues and building long term capacities, including:

- Protection for children and women
- Gender-sensitive peacebuilding
- Livelihood enhancement, focusing on women
- Resilience building of families & communities
- Context-specific psychosocial approaches to uproot embedded beliefs
- Tailored age and gender sensitive psychosocial response for bewitched children
- Building CSOs / NGOs and community level’s humanitarian response capacities

Central African Republic (CAR)

- The situation in CAR has increasingly deteriorated since September 2016. Humanitarian needs are increasing, with over 50% of the population in need of humanitarian assistance. Alarming statistics highlight:
  - 1 in 4 health structures have been destroyed
  - 2 in 3 within CAR have no access to health care
  - On average, 1 doctor exists for every 22,000 patients
  - Approximately 23,000 children under 5 have been admitted for treatment with Severe Acute Malnutrition
  - 1 in 2 are food insecure
  - 2 in 3 have no access to potable water
  - 9 in 10 have no access to a functional latrine
- Current data estimates that 20% of population are displaced. Approximately 503,000 IDPs are located across 74 sites, comprised of up to 47% children. A further 481,000 refugees are spread across four countries (Cameroon, Chad, DRC and Congo).
- Outbreaks of violence are occurring in areas previously considered calm and stable.
  - CAR is most dangerous place for NGO workers to operate. In 2017, a total of 2,075 security incidents have been reports, with 151 incidents involving NGO personnel.
  - Throughout 2016, humanitarian aid workers in CAR were involved in more 365 security incidents — more than Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia.
  - MINUSCA troops exiting from West are not being replaced. This is undermining stability in the regions, with a growing risk of increasing aggression against the population and humanitarian workers.

Response priorities

- Increased support is urgently required. The current Humanitarian Response Plan is 30% funded, and under revision for a likely increase in funding needs.
- Access and protection concerns remain high: Whilst various provinces across CAR are more stable, there is a risk these areas will destabilize. Increased investment for stabilization and development funding is vital to ensure these areas are supported appropriately.
- Programmatically, there is a strong need to better align humanitarian and development resourcing and programming throughout CAR. In addition to meeting immediate needs, humanitarian programming must support:
  - peace and social cohesion
  - sustainable livelihood creation
  - disarmament, with a particular focus on youth to prevent at-risk youth engaging in armed groups.