C.A.R.E.D.I

Central African Republic Electoral Democracy Initiative

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Since its independence in 1960 the CAR has faced incredible instability with continual political upheavals, coupes, and struggles for power. At the heart of the issue is a number of divisions in the country including political affiliation, religion, land, and ethnicity. These divisions have led to a multitude of armed groups within the CAR pursuing their own agendas.

While the problems in the CAR are extremely complex, the Central African Republic Electoral Democracy Initiative (CAREDI) aims to monitor and secure the democratic process of voting for the CAR's upcoming local elections, the first of their kind since 1988.

This initiative could provide citizens with a safe democratic process while giving legitimacy to the election results, and mitigating violence. Subsequently providing citizens with a legitimate local governance to work from the bottom up. Due to the mandate's nature, the initiative will also leave the CAR with a greater capacity for local electoral monitoring in the future.

While CAREDI will not solve the complex issues of the CAR, it will provide citizens with the opportunity to safely cast their vote for a legitimate local government. As a result, citizens of the CAR may finally have credible representation at the local level. This may incentivize local democratic, political, and civil society participation to address the nation's issues.

Project CAREDI is a track-two initiative focusing on electoral monitoring in the Central African Republic. With special attention on conflict mitigation, and preventative measures for addressing violent conflict from occurring in the future.

The CAR has a long history of electoral conflict: the overthrow of its first president soon after independence, the coups of the late 1990s and early 2000s, the Séléka regime's coup in 2013, and the ethnic conflicts surrounding these elections and coup.[i] In 2020, due to contested elections, fighting erupted once more;[ii] though attempts to quell armed groups have been made, ongoing violence and ethnic tensions are major obstacles to achieving stability.

With the upcoming federal election, as well as the local elections scheduled for July 2023 – which have not been held since 1988[iii] – this project aims to minimize the potential for a spike in violence, the deterioration of critical infrastructure, and a potential humanitarian crisis. The long-term aim of Project CAREDI is to help foster long-term growth for civil society and political participation.

There are four main objectives:
1. ***Achieving a free, fair, and transparent municipal election cycle with minimal violent eruptions.***
   The project hopes to ensure the participation of as many people from the different ethnic and religious groups of the CAR as possible. The main goal is to incentivize participation, and to prevent persecution or suppression of the voters that may occur due to religious and ethnic tensions. Having a neutral third party monitoring the situation, and potentially ensuring media coverage, will hopefully deter the more violent forms of dissuasion and election suppression. Finally, by providing electoral monitoring in collaboration with a third party, the aim is to minimize the likelihood of contested elections and accusations of bias in the voting process.
2. ***Increased electoral participation by minority groups and increased democratic participation of women and girls.***

The conflict between ethnic groups in the CAR have taken on a religious dimension,[iv] which has aggravated the issue and the potential for further violence. The project hopes to ensure the participation for as many of the 80 ethnic groups[v,vi] in the CAR as possible, and to minimize possible persecution or deterrence. It will also be important to ensure that the different ethnic and religious makeup in each region is taken into account. Given that Muslims in the country continue to suffer from systemic discrimination,[vii] a situation potentially shared by other religious and ethnic minorities, it is key to facilitate their participation by ensuring that such underrepresented groups are given the necessary access, tools, and information to have their votes and voices counted. Finally, inspired by Canada's feminist foreign policy and UN Women, there will be concerted effort to help women and girls become more involved in the democratic process.

3. *Electoral democracy capacity building for future local and national elections.*
   The project hopes to create a locally-owned framework that can be trusted and maintained, where measures against the eruption of violence is built in; this process can then be replicated and strengthened with each election. It will also be important to utilize and increase the resiliency of existing systems and structures in each region that replaced local elections since 1988. Encouraging participation in elections and reducing disenfranchisement will reduce the grounds for contested elections, providing greater legitimacy to election results and fostering unity. Most importantly, restoring legitimacy in local and national elections can then allow for greater attention to the country's economy and crumbling infrastructure.

4. *Build and foster relationships with local communities, NGOs, and governmental institutions for future partnerships.*
   It will be important to communicate with local communities throughout the whole project, focusing on their priorities and knowledge; this will ensure the election processes and training are sustainable, locally owned, and are tailored to the needs of the different ethnic and religious groups. Furthermore, partnering with NGOs on the ground can help us gain more funding, and allow us to work together to achieve the goals of lessened violence, greater security, and better infrastructure. Finally, working with governmental institutions will be crucial in ensuring electoral democracy capacity building and legitimizing election results.

Project CAREDI and its potential outcomes are important to Canada's foreign policy priorities. First, the project supports democracy, the rule of law, the empowerment of women and girls, and human rights – values which Canada strongly believes in. Secondly, this could potentially counter Russia's influence, present in the CAR through the Wagner group,[viii] in this area. Finally, it bolsters Canada's foreign policy and creates an entry point for further economic relationships, especially given Canada's intention to develop its first Africa engagement strategy.[ix]

<div style="background:#1F3864;color:white;padding:8px;text-align:center;font-weight:bold;">⧉ PRE-PROJECT RISK ASSESSMENT</div>

Although President Toudéra's government has been making some progress in pushing back rebel groups with the help of the Wagner Group[x], an eruption of conflict would be one of the greatest risks in implementing this program. Permission would also have to be granted by the president and his government, which could be potentially rejected due to the country's recent history with contested elections[xi]. However, CAREDI's potential to legitimize official structures could placate these concerns. Nevertheless, care would have to be taken to both gain permission from appropriate authorities while also ensuring that program personnel can be protected and removed if violence breaks out.

In particular, the fracturing of rebel groups due to the Forces Armées Centrafricaines (FACA) offensive may pose significant danger to personnel. This situation calls for the involvement of MINUSCA in maintaining security around election centers, with the Wagner Group also being notified, at minimum, about program

activities. The success of this intervention will rely heavily on the continued participation of the respective armed forces in CAR, while also separating the program from the alleged abuses perpetrated by these forces against civilians[xii]. Utilizing local knowledge should not only allow for a more facile approach, but will also aid in the transfer of election monitoring knowledge to local actors. Women should also be appropriately included in program personnel in order to reflect the objectives and stress the importance of their political participation.

CAREDI risks exacerbating societal cleavages if improperly implemented. Literature on electoral violence finds that the presence of international election observation programs have mixed effects on electoral violence, with there being an increased likelihood of violence if election rigging is exposed[xiii]. However, weak electoral management bodies (EMBs) are also identified as the cause for election violence[xiv]. If these facets of election monitoring can be taken into account, CAREDI has the potential to strengthen CAR's EMBs while also providing contingency plans if election rigging is discovered and exposed. Utmost caution must be taken in ensuring that the intervention is seen as legitimate, unbiased, and capable. This will require a transparent and inclusive process, while also anticipating potentially high-risk situations that may occur. A longer-term monitoring and evaluation process with the training of local election monitors (as part of strengthening EMBs) should further strengthen the intervention and mitigate risks.

OPERATIONAL DECISIONS &PROJECT MONITORING

Since the project will need to be present in a pan-national nature to adequately monitor the multitude of local elections, the structure of the operation will follow the regional divisions of the Central African Republic. CAR. has 20 prefectures (provinces). Each prefecture will have a regional hub to act as a command centre that will communicate with the election monitoring teams within their respective prefecture. The Regional hubs will also be in charge of monitoring local events for possible violence and threats to the election monitoring teams as electoral violence is common in the CAR.[xv] These regional hubs will have a Project Operational Head Quarters in the capital city, Bangui. Bangui will act as an administrative and reporting hub to ensure that CAREDI has central direction and maintains regular condensed reports to organizational leadership and partners.

Communication methods are a relatively large concern as internet is accessible to just over 11% of CAR. residents.[xvi] Two responses may provide a possible solution to this communication barrier. The first is the adoption of radio communication methods between the electoral teams and regional hubs, and between the regional hubs and the Project Operational Head Quarters in Bangui. Radio offers a reliable and instantaneous method of communication. The second option is the use of large-scale satellite internet. This method would need partners such as Starlink to ensure no local or regional team is without communication methods. However, the use of radio partnered with internet access in Bangui should be able to overcome this concern without an increase in cost.

As mentioned, violence is a considerable concern, and the protection of electoral monitors is paramount. Therefore, protections must be in place. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) is "mandated to protect civilians and support transition processes in the Central African Republic."[xvii] Since MINUSCA has already recognized the necessity of municipal elections[xviii] and there is an armed peacekeeping force in the country,[xix] a partnership with the MINUSCA would provide the necessary protection for CAREDI project members in the field. Additionally, MINUSCA would bring a level of proactive knowledge in areas most prone to violence.

MINUSCA will not be the only partner needed for local knowledge and engagement. CAREDI needs to partner with local civil society groups, NGOs, and governments to ensure local participation and long-term stability

can be achieved. Training and working with the groups mentioned will decrease the perception that outside groups are interfering with the election, rather locals are determining the legitimacy of the elections. Further, the ethnic and religious divisions within C.A.R. should not be exacerbated. So, by partnering with local members of the community, the likelihood of causing further rifts is mitigated.

At the national and international level, Canada and other prospective government partners should operate as a resource allocative actor. Much of the work must be done with locals rather than by governments which means that NGOs are better suited to work on the ground implementing the project. This does. Not mean that Global Affairs Canada is meant to only provide financial support. Canadian connections to prospective partners and support regarding security measures are needed as discussed previously.

Logic Model
Operational decisions and monitoring of CAREDI is illustrated in the logic model in Appendix A.

PARTNERSHIPS AND STAKEHOLDERS

The successful fulfillment of CAREDI will require an array of stakeholders and partnerships. Due to the delicacy of both the mandate, and the CAR, Global Affairs Canada (GAC) will be in consultation with multiple actors who can help GAC appreciate the situation's nuances in order to maximize success. Additionally, CAREDI will need to create pivotal buy-in using track II initiatives and utilizing local partners and non-governmental organizations at the regional level, due to their long presence in the CAR, mandate overlaps, resources, and higher levels of trust.

Frontline:
***Security measures*:** CAREDI's assessment is cognizant of the realities in the CAR and the potential for violence. As a result, CAREDI will utilize MINUSCA, as the objectives of CAEDI fall within the scope of MINUSCA's mandate – including the necessity of municipal elections, monitoring of threats, and the protection of civilians from violence.[xx] MINUSCA can also provide evacuation plans for monitors and international actors.[xxi] Should violence prevail Rwanda forces who have an interest in CAR stability may correspond with MINUSCA to fill operational gaps, and mandates outside of MINUSCA's scope.[xxii]

***Electoral monitoring*:** To create local buy-in and provide longer-term results the local CAR National Election Authority (CARNEA) will be trained in municipal electoral monitoring by CANADEM. CANADEM is a civilian led international response corp from Canada and has experience with both short-term and long-term electoral monitoring.[xxiii] Subsequent to CANADEM's work with CARNEA during the regional elections CANADEM will relinquish resources to CARNEA for future success.

Logistics:
Lead: Global Affairs Canada (GAC) will take lead on the project logistics and coordination. GAC has a limited operating history in the country but has an interest due to their upcoming Africa engagement strategy.[xxiv] Due to the pan national scope of the project, and local nature of the elections, GAC will have to compile a list of appropriate local organizations and NGOs to help facilitate the process. This coordination will be more attainable through GACs extensive consultation and collaboration resources.

Consultation and collaboration:
Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) will advise GAC on potential displacement and contingency plans in the event of negative outcomes. GAC will also use their gender-based analysis framework in collaboration with counsel from UN Women to mitigate the risk to women, and empower women through the intervention.

Services: The Internet may be mandatory as a secondary and pan-national method of reporting. If this is the case Starlink may be utilized for internet access, while local radio and SMS may be used to update local results.

Entry Points

La Francophonie has a history and good rapport with the CAR, and has recently engaged in election monitoring at the national level. As a result, La Francophonie may serve as a valuable entry point into the CAR, as well as an additional resource for consultation on election monitoring in the nation.

Each consultation and collaboration actor will be asked to inform GAC on local and non-governmental organizations that could help facilitate these objectives where there may be an overlap in agendas.

PROJECT EVALUATION

Evaluation of project results will revolve around three stages: a pre-project assessment to provide baseline metrics, an evaluation immediately post-intervention, and a secondary assessment to measure long-term outputs and overall impacts.

Quantitative data will be gathered using surveys and questionnaires, and statistical analysis will be performed on electoral data and incidents of violence. Cluster and stratified sampling methods will be used in pre-election and post-election surveys and questionnaires, to provide a baseline. Due to the practical limitations of evaluating each electoral constituency where the project was implemented, constituencies will be randomly chosen. Within these clusters, stratified sampling will be used to ensure that the voices of local religious minorities and women are heard. Interviews with key informants will be undertaken before and after the intervention, to gain a better understanding of the project's results. This qualitative data will be used to inform the veracity of our theory of change, and to inform whether long term impacts may be realized. The four objectives will be measured by their respective indicators and methods:

The first two objectives will be evaluated by conducting an analysis of electoral irregularities and fraud, examining election-related violence data, and assessing the effectiveness of transparency measures. Furthermore, the intervention aims to build electoral democracy capacity for future national and local elections by evaluating training programs for election officials, assessing voter education campaigns, and examining possible improvements to the electoral system. These objectives will be undertaken and evaluated in the short term, immediately after the intervention is implemented. A monitoring framework will also be used to demonstrate the effectiveness of the project.

Another critical objective of the project is to increase electoral participation by minority groups and foster the democratic participation of women and girls. This will be achieved by analyzing voter turnout data by demographic groups, evaluating targeted outreach and education efforts, and assessing gender representation in elected positions. Lastly, the project seeks to build and foster relationships with local communities, NGOs, and governmental institutions for future partnerships. Collaborative initiatives with local stakeholders will be assessed, communication and coordination efforts will be evaluated, and feedback from partner organizations will be analyzed to ensure a productive and successful collaboration.

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Appendix A

Inputs	Activities	Target Audience	Outputs	Outcomes	Impacts
• $20 million Canadian • MINUSCA • CANADEM • FACA (Central African Armed Forces) • Institutional resources from Global Affairs Canada	• Provide electoral monitoring from a neutral third party • Facilitate media coverage of the electoral process • Ensure the participation of various ethnic and religious groups • Facilitate access, tools, and information for minority groups • Promote increased participation for women • Develop and implement a locally-owned framework for electoral democracy capacity • Foster relationships with local communities, NGOs, and governmental institutions	• Central African electorate • Religious and ethnic minorities • Women	• Electoral monitoring reports and recommendations • Increased media coverage of the electoral process • Higher voter turnout among ethnic and religious minorities • Increased democratic participation of women and girls • Locally-owned framework for future elections • Strengthened existing systems and structures • Established partnerships with local communities, NGOs, and government institutions	• Free, fair, and transparent municipal elections with minimal violent eruptions • Increased electoral participation by minority groups • Increased democratic participation of women and girls • Electoral democracy capacity building for future local and national elections • Stronger relationships with local communities, NGOs, and governmental institutions for future partnerships	• Long-term growth for civil society and political participation in the CAR • Reduction in violence and ethnic tensions surrounding elections • Strengthened democracy and rule of law in the CAR • Enhanced regional stability and reduced potential for humanitarian crises • Support for Canada's foreign policy priorities, such as promoting democracy, human rights, and the empowerment of women and girls