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FINAL REPORT

USAID/DRC Community Resilience in Central Africa Evaluation and Joint Results Framework Assessment

Integrated Natural Resource Management (INRM)

Sound management of natural resources is central to long-term development and resilience. Faced with an urgent need to reduce environmental degradation while improving human well-being, solutions that effectively integrate investments in natural resource management with economic and social development are increasingly urgent. INRM promotes integrated programming across environment and non-environment sectors and across the Program Cycle. INRM supports USAID to amplify program impacts, strengthen gender equality and social inclusion, and identify best practices for integration.

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USAID/DRC Community Resilience in Central Africa and Joint Results Framework Assessment

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ACRONYMS

AP	African Parks
AWF	Africa Wildlife Foundation
CAP	Community Action Plan
CAR	Central African Republic
CARPE	Central African Regional Program for the Environment
CCT	Community Counselor Teams
CRCA	Community Resilience in Central Africa
CBCWT	Community-based Counter Wildlife Trafficking
DAI	Development Alternatives Incorporated
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ET	Evaluation Team
EU	European Union
EWS	Early Warning System
FFS	Farmer Field School
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FM	Frequency Modulation
GCPA	Garamba Chinko Protected Areas
GESI	Gender and Social Inclusion
GNP	Garamba National Park
GPS	Global Positioning System
HF	High Frequency
IC	Invisible Children
INRM	Integrated Natural Resource Management
ICCN	Congolese Institute for Nature Conservation
IR	Intermediate Result
JRF	Joint Results Framework
KII	Key Informant Interview
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer Intersex and Asexual
MEL	Monitoring Evaluation and Learning
MONUSCO	The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC
NGO	Non-Government Organization
OPED	Organization for Education and Development

PSO	Peace and Security Office
RECODDU	Réseaux Communautaires pour le Développement Durable
SGI	Small Group Interviews
SI	Social Impact
ToC	Theory of Change
TL	Team Lead
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	United States Government

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Between 2016 and 2018, the USAID/Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) launched three five-year activities to promote security, conservation, and development across the Mbomou-Uélé region of the DRC and the Central African Republic (CAR). These activities, including the CRCA, Garamba Chinko Protected Areas (GCPA) Activity, and Community-based Counter Wildlife Trafficking (CBCWT) Activity, operate under a common conceptual Joint Results Framework (JRF).

The CRCA and JRF intervention areas share significant social, political, security, logistical, and development challenges which provide critical context, and in many cases, constraints, to activity and evaluation implementation. The Mbomou-Uélé region straddles the 1,700-kilometer-long border between DRC and CAR. This region broadly includes three protected areas: GNP (and the three neighbouring Azande, Mondo Missa, and Gangala na Bodio hunting blocks), Chinko Reserve, and Bili-Uélé Protected Area. The lack of a strong state presence allows militia groups to operate in these regions and enables cross-border arms trade and wildlife trafficking. Many armed groups such as the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) that are active across the region poach wildlife to fund their activities. Armed groups active in the equatorial regions of South Sudan, including the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-in-Opposition and National Salvation Front, also seek shelter, medicine, and reinforcements in DRC forest areas like Garamba National Park. These groups contribute to insecurity for civilians and are harmful to wildlife. Insecurity in the region also facilitates many other forms of criminality.

The overlapping security, humanitarian, and conservation problems in the region stimulated USAID to re-think regional intervention strategies. Through collaboration with Invisible Children (IC), African Parks (AP), and other key stakeholders, USAID funded the JRF and CRCA. These activities serve to build community resilience by strengthening wildlife conservation initiatives and protecting surrounding communities from armed groups that threaten the sustainability of the region's resources. The JRF outlines how the three activities — GCPA, CRCA, and CBCWT — work together to contribute to security, conservation, and development in the region. All three activities are implemented to jointly realize six Intermediate Results (IRs) that aim to ultimately achieve the overarching objective of improving community resilience and wildlife conservation in the Mbombou-Uélé border region of DRC and CAR.

USAID/DRC contracted the INRM team, including Development Alternatives Incorporated (DAI) and Social Impact (SI), to conduct a midterm performance evaluation of the CRCA Activity and an assessment of the JRF for CRCA, GCPA, and CBCWT. With USAID's approval, the Evaluation Team (ET) is providing one evaluation report that encompasses both the CRCA Activity and JRF.

EVALUATION DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION

The CRCA evaluation and JRF assessment were designed to generate findings, conclusions, and recommendations to inform CRCA management, new activity development, and potential benefits of the JRF approach. As such the evaluation and assessment were guided by a set of evaluation questions, including four questions for the CRCA evaluation and three questions for the JRF assessment. The evaluation team ET primarily utilized qualitative methods, though the ET also reviewed project documents and relevant literature to inform findings. The ET conducted the following activities:

- A desk review of existing project documents, data, and reports.
- 45 qualitative interviews (mostly individual but sometimes with two participants) and three focus group discussions with key stakeholders and beneficiaries. After three focus group discussions, the ET considered them to be inappropriate because of the poor quality of information shared in the group setting. People tended to be reluctant to express themselves freely in front of their peers.

- The ET also had informal conversations with an additional approximately 100 people who provided information throughout the fieldwork phase.

The ET did whatever possible to apply a strong gender and social inclusion lens to the evaluation and assessment design, data collection, data analysis, and report preparation. In particular, the ET focused on how the CRCA Activity achieved gender equality through opportunities and results and the extent to which additional social inclusion categories shaped results.

After kicking off the project on March 22nd, 2021, the ET prepared an Inception report,approved by USAID on May 7th. Field activities began soon after the approval of the Inception report and continued through July 3rd. Following the completion of fieldwork, the ET – along with assistance from SI staff – conducted data analysis and report writing prior to submitting the first draft report on August 11th. After conducting approximately ten additional interviews, reviewing additional project documents, and responding to constructive feedback from USAID, IC, and AP, a revised draft report, submitted on December 16, 2021.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

CRCA Summary Findings and Conclusions

USAID's initiative to design and implement community resilience support linked to conservation priorities in the remote Mbomou-Uélé region has proven to be meaningful for both human and wildlife populations. Part of USAID's value added through CRCA is a physical presence in a region largely neglected by other international donors. In countries such as the DRC and CAR where outside assistance is limited, even relatively small efforts can be impactful.

The region is raft with security, infrastructure, human resources, and other problems that contribute to extremely high transaction costs for accomplishing even seemingly minor activities. These challenges have constrained IC's efforts to transition from a successful awareness-building and training partner to the realization of concrete results that are meaningful to people at a reasonable scale in some objective areas.

IC has achieved reasonable success in their objectives, especially IR 2 (preventing or mitigating security and conservation threats). This is done primarily through the deployment of high frequency (HF) radios and the Early Warning System (EWS); however, objectively verifiable impacts were limited for IRs 3 (livelihoods), 4 (trauma healing) and 5 (preventing intercommunal conflict). The ET acknowledges that IC met many of its approved indicator targets, as reported to USAID in the CRCA Quarterly Performance Reports. However, the ET finds these indicators to be primarily based on outputs rather than outcomes. While these indicators and targets provide important benchmarks for activity implementation, they largely fail to capture the effectiveness of the activity in meaningfully improving peoples' lives. Although CRCA succeeded in meeting many of these targets, the ET believes it is crucial to assess the activity in terms of its tangible impacts. Through this lens, the ET was unable to observe meaningful sustainable livelihood initiatives designed or implemented through CRCA. The ETs findings show that CRCA currently lacks the capacity, expertise, and scope to make an impactful contribution to trauma-related issues or the peaceful transformation of intercommunal violence given human resources limitations, logistical challenges, and the magnitude of the problem. For IRs 3, 4 and 5 the ET was unable to detect significant behavior change or attitude change. These are admittedly difficult to bring about and will take time to materialize.

JRF Summary Findings and Conclusions

The JRF makes theoretical sense at the design level and is a good illustration of synergies between CARPE and PSO at the USAID Mission in Kinshasa. Field partners agree that there is a need to design and implement such an integrated management approach. However, they find it quite difficult to prioritize adapting their workplans and activities to accommodate the need to respect the JRF IRs and sub-IRs. This can be summarized as support in theory but confusion in practice.

The one significant exception to this problem is the overwhelming desire to participate in information sharing through the EWS (as discussed above). Human well-being and wildlife conservation has been enhanced through the EWS and sharing of intelligence between communities and Garamba National Park (GNP) rangers.

The security context that prevailed when the JRF Theory of Change (ToC) was developed has shifted. LRA attacks have lessened but new problems with the Mbororo are escalating and civil war in CAR is intensifying. The arrival of CAR refugees into DRC is already a strain on conservation efforts and could escalate. These problems could not have been considered at the time of JRF design and therefore highlight the need to rethink the ToC. The ToC allows for flexibility but implementing new actions to respond to shifting security threats is something that could be difficult for IC and AP, especially in the time remaining for CRCA, CBCWT, and GCPA.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Early Warning System and communication network

The ET recommends pursuing and scaling up this work with the following suggestions.

1. IC, Caritas, Catholic Relief Services, and the Congolese army all have HF radio systems. There is inadequate coordination between these systems. Coordination between these systems, sometimes operating near one another, needs to be designed and implemented. IC should intensify its work with the Catholic church at the local level. The ET is aware that any coordination with military services could have unwanted consequences on civilians so an appropriate collaboration strategy with the military requires careful consideration.
2. The Mbomou-Uélé region is vast and is home to thousands of villages and hamlets. IC should scale up its rolling out of EWS and deployment of HF radios. The ET is aware that this could require additional funds to purchase and install equipment.
3. As increased phone coverage reaches the Mbomou-Uélé region, the HF radio system and EWS will outlive their technological relevance. IC currently works with private operators to reinforce the EWS. CRCA has opened discussions with the mobile phone telecommunication companies in DRC and CAR to extend cell phone coverage to more communities, so that the integration of mobile phone use (voice, text, and data) can be further extended to more communities. The ET recommends continuing discussions with private operators to extend coverage.
4. Improved communication networks come with risks. IC should review its due diligence trainings to ensure that the radio operators they support are careful not to spread misinformation. Although IC reports that Peace Committees and HF radio operators follow due diligence training provided by CRCA, the ET was unable to confirm the impact of these trainings in the communities visited during fieldwork.

Livelihoods

The IC livelihoods programming needs to be revamped as results are currently inadequate. IC should focus on the work they do well and re-evaluate the financial costs and operational risks of placing unrealistic expectations on their staff. Alternatively, IC will need to work in far closer partnership with AP (and local associations such as Organization for Education and Development (OPED)). Any rethinking of the livelihoods projects needs to be done in concert with economists specializing in rural development. Based on the sites the ET visited, interviews with key informants, project reporting, and multiple informal conversations and observations, the ET did not find convincing evidence that IC's livelihood initiatives meaningfully improved the livelihoods of community members. These efforts, including projects that focus on agriculture, road rehabilitation and construction, do not appear to have increased economic activity in target communities. This is informed by the problems of staff qualifications, the structural problems in

creating wealth in extremely remote areas, and the complexity of social relations – all of which are detailed throughout this report.

Dealing with trauma and preventing intercommunal conflict

CRCA has not demonstrated the requisite skill sets at the field level in this sector. The ET was not able to establish how skills, knowledge, and engagement trickled down into field activities. Given the significant suite of challenges and obstacles in meeting these objectives (IRs 4 and 5), IC should either phase these activities out or partner with organizations that have local credibility, conceptual capacity, and proven management skills.

CRCA Management

While many of the challenges faced by CRCA stem from the inherently difficult environment of the Mbomou-Uélé region, certain limitations stem from IC's management deficit. The ET, based on discussions with key informants, concludes that the IC Kinshasa office has not demonstrated the management capacity needed to implement such an ambitious project. The ET therefore recommends that USAID have an open discussion with IC international and Kinshasa-based management to mitigate the problems as CRCA enters its final year.

Managing Integrated Programming

The integrated nature of the JRF and CRCA led to benefits, particularly related to synergies in communication efforts for reducing violence and poaching. However, it also created challenges in implementation, including related to implementing coordination between partners on the ground and ensuring adequate expertise across a variety of targeted outcome sectors. To improve on integrated programming, the ET recommends the following:

1. Although perhaps more difficult to manage from the administrative and financial perspectives, the ET recommends that CRCA broaden the implementation pool of expertise to other local and international partners with proven sectoral and geographic experience in the areas where results have been less prominent. The ET recommends USAID strongly consider the breadth of expertise required in future cross-sectoral programs and whether that can be covered by IC and AP and their partners alone. Additional expertise is needed.
2. Under the JRF or future integrated programming, USAID should institutionalize improved collaboration and communication between IPs and other stakeholders, which to date are inadequate and do not appear to be considered as priorities for them. The example of how IPs share information about the presence of armed poachers and respond by sending rangers is a positive exception. Beyond collaboration and communication, any future integrated programming will also need to design an adaptive strategy to accommodate the dynamics of security threats based on the capacities of IPs.
3. Under the JRF or future integrated programming, USAID should lead a process with the IPs to operationalize more efficiently and explicitly the links between IRs. This will help clarify for IPs how they can effectively collaborate and identify ways that collaboration or integration can move beyond the theoretical to the implementation level.

The State

CRCA and JRF actors should pursue avenues to be more inclusive by working harder with state representatives in the decentralized entities and relevant environment authorities, despite the real challenges sometimes faced in working with these stakeholders. Representatives of the State at all levels are potentially valuable partners able to contribute to CRCA. To date, however, the ET found little effective engagement with these representatives in the field, and State actors interviewed by the ET were displeased with the level of CRCA engagement.

USAID in the field

USAID staff need to have more exposure to the realities of project implementation by spending time in the field. KIs from USAID expressed frustration about travel restrictions. This is why USAID has a Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Contract, although this mechanism still does not allow direct knowledge or experience of field realities.

Social sciences and economics

All the community development activities, livelihood activities, and strategies to deal with trauma and conflict mitigation need to be reinforced by the institutionalized involvement of social scientists who can contribute to making sure local belief systems, world views, constraints, and expectations are more carefully integrated into programming. The ET acknowledges that IC works with some social scientists; however, their contributions at the field level were not clearly observed. The ET believes that a deeper engagement–at the field and conceptual levels–with experienced economists, anthropologists, sociologists and political scientists is fundamental for the remainder of CRCA and design in any related extensions or new projects.

I. INTRODUCTION

Between 2016 and 2018, USAID/ Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) launched three five-year activities under its CARPE and Peace and Security Office to promote security, conservation, and development across the Mbomou-Uélé region of DRC and the Central African Republic (CAR). These activities include the CRCA Activity, Garamba Chinko Protected Areas (GCPA) Activity, and Community-Based Counter Wildlife Trafficking (CBCWT) Activity. The three activities operate under a common JRF. The CRCA Activity is implemented by Invisible Children, and the GCPA and CBCWT Activities are implemented by African Parks (AP).

In 2021, USAID/DRC contracted DAI's INRM team, including subcontracted SI team members, to conduct:

1. A midterm performance evaluation of the CRCA Activity; and
2. An assessment of the JRF for CRCA, GCPA, and CBCWT.

The evaluation and assessment generated conclusions and recommendations to inform management of CRCA, development of new activities, and potential benefits of the JRF approach. As approved by USAID, this report encompasses findings, conclusions, and recommendations for the CRCA Activity and JRF.

BACKGROUND

Overview

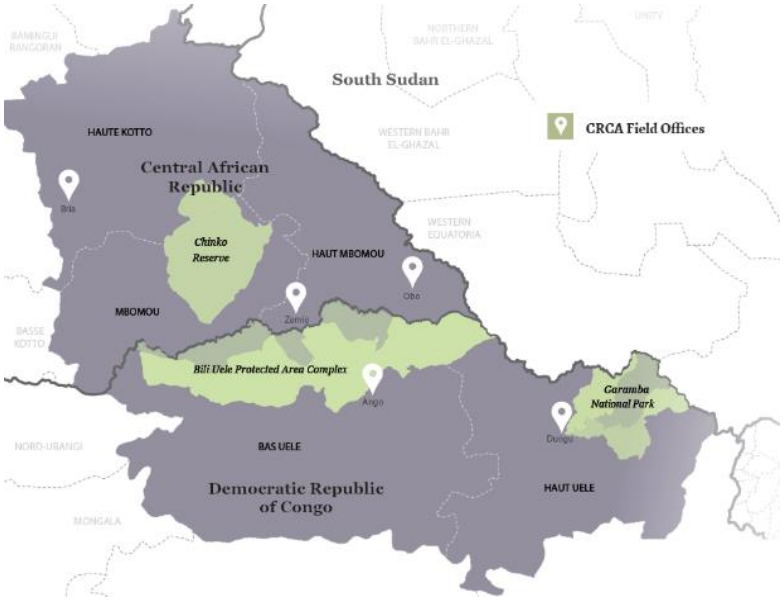
The CRCA and JRF intervention areas share significant social, political, security, logistical, and development challenges which provide critical context, and in many cases, constraints, to Activity and evaluation implementation. Here, we summarize those contextual factors. The Mbomou-Uélé region straddles the 1,700-kilometer-long border between DRC and CAR. As displayed in Figure 1, this region broadly includes three protected areas: Garamba National Park, Chinko Reserve, and Bili-Uélé Protected Area, in the Bas-Uélé, Haut-Uélé, Mbomou, Haut Mboumou, and Haute Kotto provinces. The lack of a strong state presence allows militia groups to operate in these regions and enables cross-border arms trade and wildlife trafficking. Many armed groups such as the LRA that are active across the region poach wildlife to fund their activities.[1] Armed groups active in the equatorial regions of South Sudan, including the SPLA-IO and National Salvation Front, also seek shelter, medicine, and reinforcements in DRC forest areas like Garamba National Park.[2] These groups contribute to both insecurity for civilians and devastation of endangered wildlife.[3] Insecurity in the region also facilitates many other forms of criminality.

1 UN Security Council. (2014). "Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa and on the Lord's Resistance Army-affected areas."

2 Social Science in Humanitarian Action. (2019). "Key considerations: cross-border dynamics between South Sudan and DRC." https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/20.500.12413/14766/SSHAP_cross_order_dynamics_South_Sudan_DRC.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

3 Ibid.

FIGURE 1. MAP OF THE DRC-CAR BORDER REGION



Source: Invisible Children

Population dynamics

The estimated populations of Haut-Uélé and Bas-Uélé total approximately two million and one million, respectively. Estimates show that 80 percent of the Haut-Uélé and Bas-Uélé province populations belongs to the Zande ethnic group.[4] This group is indigenous to Haut-Uélé and Bas-Uélé and occupies a large part of the surrounding region, including South Sudan, Eastern CAR, and Northeastern DRC.[5] Another prominent group moving into the Mbomou-Uélé region is the Mbororo: who are generally pastorals; they live nomadic lifestyles with livestock.[6] The Mbororo are a sub-group of the Foulani ethnic group, one of the largest ethnic groups in West Africa. Ethnic differences coupled with competition for local natural resources creates tension in some villages between Mbororo and sedentary communities in the Haut-Uélé and Bas-Uélé.[7] It is difficult to engage directly and openly with the Mbororo on meaningful peace and security issues given manipulation by political actors in the DRC. IC is aware of political sensitivities and works with an internationally recognized expert on the Mbororo. The DRC authorities have made political declarations about forcefully repatriating Mbororo - which would contravene international law. IC is not mandated by the Kinshasa government to work openly with the Mbororo which explains why IC is carrying out discrete peace building engagement. There is a real risk of being criticized by the Kinshasa government

4 Ibid.

5 Elena, D. N. (April 2007). « Les Migrations Transfrontalieres Des Mbororo Au Nord-Est De La Republique Democratique Du Congo Etude De Cas Au Haut Uele Et Au Bas Uele. ». https://paxvoorvrede.nl/media/download/rapport-de-recherche-mbororo-okt-07.pdf.

6 World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples. (March 2018). "Mbororo." https://minorityrights.org/minorities/mbororo/.

7 Communities in Transition. "CAR-DRC Border Region Conflict Assessment." https://communitiesintransition.com/sites/default/files/20.04.05%20CIT%20-%20CSA%20Summary%20FINAL.pdf.

if they work openly. IC has been more successful in engaging with the Mbororo in CAR where political sensitivity is not such a challenge.

Security challenges

The Mbomou-Uélé region experiences severe security challenges, such as the ongoing Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) civilian attacks that contribute to regional insecurity. LRA first emerged in Uganda in the 1980s, and in the past 15 years has engaged in violence across central Africa with a particular concentration in DRC and CAR. LRA is notorious for human rights violations including murder, child sex slavery, looting, forced labor, and kidnapping.[8]

The December 2020 presidential and legislative elections in CAR further spurred regional violence and insecurity, driving large numbers of Central African refugees to enter northern DRC. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimated that 46,659 people arrived in Bas-Uélé province from CAR in February 2021 following the post-election tension.[9]

The security context has improved recently with increasingly limited attacks from LRA. Nevertheless, there are other significant threats emanating from the Mbororo pastoralists and Huda (South Sudanese and Chadian professional poachers). Although widely believed to be the only Peuhl clan, the Hudas (Ouddas) is just one of several Peuhl clans present in DRC - others include the Wodaabe and Djafun clans. The Allied Democratic Forces, currently very active in North Kivu, are not yet active in Haut and Bas Uélé, but they could potentially become a new and major security challenge.[10] This could result in further conflict spillover from CAR and South Sudan into CRCA region.

Local politics and role of government

Provincial authorities are unable to prevent the repeated LRA attacks and look to the central government in Kinshasa for support. The Haut-Uélé Provincial Minister in charge of security recently blamed these activities, especially kidnapping of girls under age 17 by the LRA, on under-staffing of the Congolese national army in the area.[11]

Civil society both influences local politics and frequently advocates for local rights. In July 2020 civil society leaders called for the population to refuse to pay road taxes, culminating in a meeting with the Governor of Haut-Uélé, Christophe Baseane Nangaa. In Bas-Uélé, the provincial representatives voted to depose the provincial governor in December 2020 after accusing him of embezzling 316,000 United States Dollars of public funds, as well as incompetence and questionable public affairs management.[12] Following this vote, in February 2021, civil society organized a demonstration in Buta, the capital city of Bas-Uélé, to oppose

8 Radio Okapi. (March 2021). "Haut-Uele : la société civile dénonce l'activisme de la LRA à Dungu." https://www.radiookapi.net/2021/03/12/actualite/securite/haut-uele-la-societe-civile-denonce-lactivisme-de-la-lra-dungu

9 UNHCR. (February 2021). "AD HOC UPDATE #7: New influx from the Central African Republic to the DRC." UNHCR. https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/UNHCR%20new%20influx%20from%20the%20Central%20African%20Republic%20to%20the%20DRC%2012%20February%202021.pdf.

10 BBC News. (June 2021). "Allied Democratic Forces: The Ugandan rebels working with IS in DR Congo." https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-57246001

11 Radio Okapi. (March 2021). "Haut-Uele: la société civile dénonce l'activisme de la LRA à Dungu." https://www.radiookapi.net/2021/03/12/actualite/securite/haut-uele-la-societe-civile-denonce-lactivisme-de-la-lra-dungu.

12 Radio Okapi. (December 2020). "Bas-Uele : le gouverneur Senga évincé." https://www.radiookapi.net/2020/12/29/actualite/politique/bas-uele-le-gouverneur-senga-evince.

the central government's efforts to reinstate the deposed governor.[13] These events are part of a long-standing trend in Congolese State-Society relations.

International development initiatives

The international development presence in the region has decreased significantly in recent years as the remote and insecure environment renders development activity difficult. Since 2019, the The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DR Congo (MONUSCO) has undergone budget cuts and downsizing across the country.[14] Downsizing includes the closing down of the MONUSCO office in Dungu, Haut-Uélé. MONUSCO is one of the UN's largest peacekeeping operations but is under pressure; as of April 2021, civilians are protesting MONUSCO presence in Eastern DRC due to its lack of action to meaningfully mitigate violence and instability.[15] As of April 2021, IC, implementing CRCA, is one of the few international organizations collaborating with community-based organizations to implement development activities in the region.

Regarding biodiversity, international wildlife and conservation organizations are working to directly support the region's protected areas. AP considers that protected area management generates combined returns to natural resource protection and community security.[16] The AP works to diminish the destruction of regional parks and contributes to stability by managing Garamba National Park and Chinko Reserve. AP has managed Garamba National Park (GNP) since 2005 through a public-private partnership with *Institut Congolais pour la Conservation de la Nature* (ICCN) and Chinko Reserve since 2014.[17,18] Similarly, since 2015, the African Wildlife Foundation has supported the national wildlife authority, ICCN, in implementing improved protection and participative management of the Bili-Uélé protected area.[19]

Natural resources and ecology

All three protected areas in the region (GNP, Chinko Reserve, and Bili-Uélé Protected Area) and the Azande, Mondo Missa, and Gangala na Bodio hunting zones boast significant flora and fauna that face threats from poachers, armed groups, and unsustainable subsistence activities. Garamba National Park, created in 1938, spans 5,133 square kilometers and is home to approximately 1,200 elephants.[20,21] Protected species such as hippos and elephants to a lesser extent create frustration amongst local communities by devastating crop fields in these buffer areas. Chinko Reserve, approximately 20,000 square

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13 Radio Okapi. (February 2021). "Bas-Uélé : concert de casseroles à Buta pour s'opposer à la réhabilitation du gouverneur Valentin Senga." https://www.radiookapi.net/2021/02/15/actualite/politique/bas-uele-concert-de-casseroles-buta-pour-sopposer-la-rehabilitation.

14 Hansrod, Z. (2019). "UN mission in DR Congo, MONUSCO, to downsize." https://www.rfi.fr/en/africa/20190423-un-mission-drcongo-downsize.

15 Redaction Africanews. (2021). "Strike over civilian massacres brings DR Congo's east to a halt." https://www.africanews.com/2021/04/08/strike-over-civilian-massacres-brings-dr-congo-s-east-to-a-halt/.

16 African Parks (n.d.). "English Booklet." https://www.africanparks.org/sites/default/files/uploads/resources/2018-11/20181029_African%20Parks%20Booklet_Update_V18_General%20Booklet_Web_English_Single%20Pages.pdf

17 African Parks. (n.d.). "Garamba." https://www.africanparks.org/the-parks/garamba.

18 African Parks. (n.d.). "Chinko." tps://www.africanparks.org/the-parks/chinko,.

19 African Wildlife Foundation. (n.d.). "AWF Kickstarts Efforts in Bili-Uele protected Area." https://www.awf.org/blog/awf-kickstarts-efforts-bili-uele-protected-area.

20 ibid.

21 African Parks. (n.d.). "Garamba." https://www.africanparks.org/the-parks/garamba.

kilometers, is especially known for its rich biodiversity due to its mix of savanna and rainforest species.[22,23] The Bili-Uélé Protected Area covers approximately 40,000 km² and is the largest protected area in the DRC.[24] The area is home to the largest population of eastern chimpanzees in Africa. However, a decline in economic activities and the deterioration of roads and bridges has led some residents of surrounding communities to turn to extractive, particularly in the three hunting areas Azande, Mondo Missa and Gangala Na Bodio) surrounding Garamba Park, often to the detriment of natural resource preservation. Miners are particularly interested in the region's untapped iron, gold, and diamond deposits. The proximity of Kibali, one of Africa's largest gold mines, threatens Garamba park as rapid population growth is increasing pressures on forest resources such as bushmeat and charcoal.[25] The presence of artisanal miners in the protected area was exacerbated when they were displaced after the company KalNorth Gold Mines (KGM) fenced in the industrial mining concession. At that time, most of the diggers entered into the protected area for artisanal gold extraction.

JOINT RESULTS FRAMEWORK AND CRCA ACTIVITY

The overlapping security, humanitarian, and conservation problems in the region stimulated USAID to re-think regional intervention strategies. Through collaboration with IC, AP, and other key stakeholders, USAID funded the Joint Results Framework (JRF) and CRCA in the Mbomou-Uélé region. These activities serve to build community resilience by strengthening wildlife conservation initiatives and protecting surrounding communities from the armed groups that threaten the sustainability of the region's resources.

The JRF outlines how the three CARPE/PSO activities — GCPA,[26] CRCA, and CBCWT[27] — work additively to contribute to security, conservation, and development in the region. All three activities are implemented to jointly realize six IRs to ultimately achieve the overarching objective: community resiliency and wildlife conservation improved in the Mbombou-Uélé border region of DRC and CAR. Figure 2 below shows how the three activities contribute to achieving the sub-IRs, IRs, and overall objective.

22 African Parks. (May 2020). "CAR Government and African Parks Sign New Agreement for Chinko, Protecting One of Central Africa's Largest Conservation Areas." https://www.africanparks.org/african-parks-signs-new-agreement-chinko.

23 USAID. (n.d.) "CARPE – Garamba and Chinko Protected Areas." https://carpe.umd.edu/sites/default/files/CAFEC_%20Garamba%20Chinko%20Fact%20sheet.pdf.

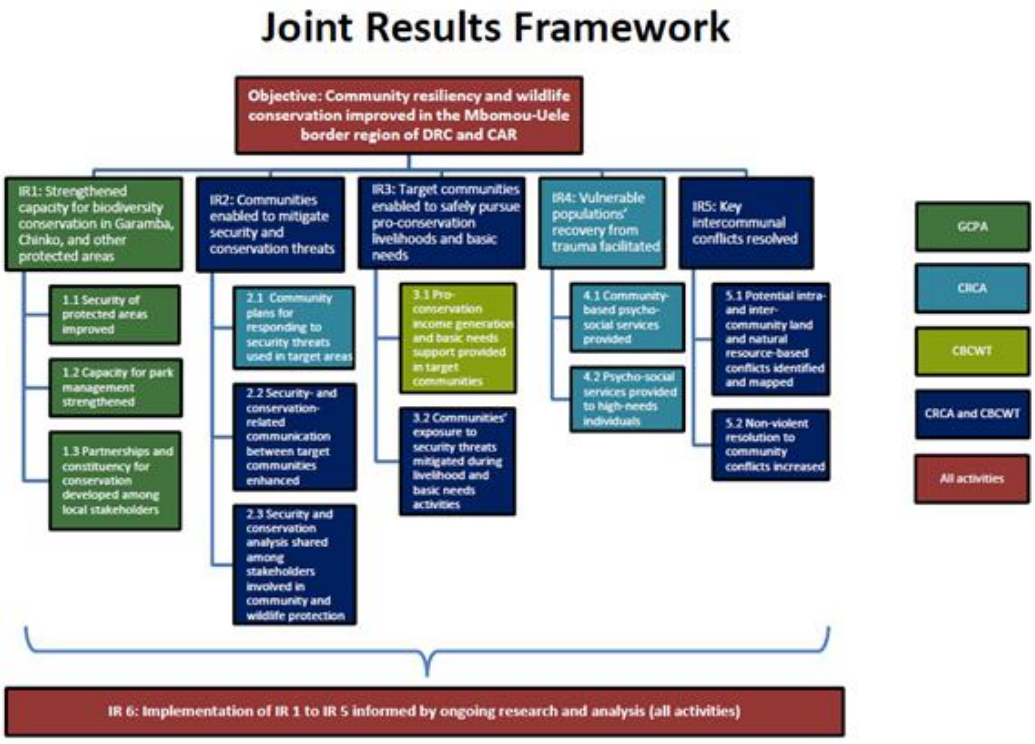
24 African Wildlife Foundation. (n.d.). "Democratic Republic of the Congo." https://www.awf.org/country/drc.

25 Based on interviews with evaluation respondents.

26 GCPA began in 2016.

27 CBCWT began in 2018.

FIGURE 2. JOINT RESULTS FRAMEWORK DIAGRAM



Source: Invisible Children

The integrated framework is intended to serve as a basis for collaborating and coordinating across activities, building a shared monitoring system, and exploring learning questions.

CRCA BACKGROUND AND PROGRESS TO DATE

CRCA is a five-year, USAID-funded project that aims to strengthen the resilience of communities in the Mbomou Uélé Border Region in the face of threats to the security of both humans and wildlife. Launched in October 2017, CRCA is equipping target communities with training, tools, and information to:

- Prevent and adapt to threats of violent conflict
- Participate in regional efforts to protect wildlife from armed group exploitation
- Develop safe and sustainable livelihood opportunities
- Recognize and recover from violence-induced trauma
- Peacefully transform intercommunal conflicts

The CRCA activity is also improving regional conflict analysis and cross-border information sharing to inform civilian protection efforts and increase coordination among security actors, Peace Committees, humanitarians, and conservation actors.

CRCA is one of three activities that currently operate under a **JRF** through USAID/DRC's CARPE and PSO. These three activities also form the USAID/DRC Regional Conflict and Environment collaboration cluster:

- CRCA – led by Invisible Children
- GCPA – led by AP
- CBCWT – led by AP

The conceptual framework that underpins CARPE-PSO JRF presents three interrelated elements: security, conservation, and development. These three elements contribute to building stability and resilience and are woven into all three projects. Part of the implementation of the framework is to explore the relationship across these three elements and determine the extent to which community resilience and wildlife conservation can be simultaneously improved. The JRF for the CRCA, GCPA, and CBCWT projects includes one overarching objective and six IRs. Certain results are project-specific while others are joint, with the implementation involving at least two of the three projects. The framework serves as a basis for (1) collaborating and coordinating across activities, (2) building a shared monitoring system, and (3) exploring learning questions.

USAID launched CRCA in 2017. The program seeks to address the interconnectivities between violence perpetrated by armed groups and wildlife conservation in the Mbomou-Uélé region of DRC and CAR. CRCA equips beneficiary communities with community-centric training, tools, and information. Activities include implementing a high-frequency radio Early Warning System (EWS) to increase inter-community coordination, as well as organizing peacebuilding events and alternative livelihood projects. The project builds on IC's established regional programs which strengthen community resilience while reinforcing conservation initiatives.

The theory of change for the CRCA Activity is as follows: "*If* civilians in the Mbomou-Uélé border region are empowered to employ community-based protection, livelihood, psychosocial, and conflict transformation tools that are inclusive, mutually-reinforcing, and in collaboration with regional conservation and protection actors, *then* communities in the region will be more resilient to the impact of armed groups, more likely to peacefully transform intercommunal conflict, and more supportive of wildlife conservation initiatives."

EVALUATION PURPOSE AND AUDIENCE

The evaluation objectives are to (i) conduct a performance evaluation of USAID's CRCA Activity and (ii) assess the JRF for CRCA, GCPA, and CBCWT. Both the evaluation and assessment are intended to generate conclusions and recommendations to inform management of CRCA, development of new activities, and potential benefits of the JRF approach. This included studying CRCA implementation and progress to understand project assumption validity and indicator appropriateness as well as the relevance, efficacy, potential impact, and sustainability of CRCA results. The evaluation also assessed the wider project context to examine the ways in which the broader context and activities might be influencing one another.

The intended users of the evaluation and assessment findings include:

- The USAID and IC CRCA teams and partners to inform adaptive management for the remaining CRCA period of performance and future programming
- The USAID and implementing partner teams engaged in CARPE-PSO JRF, including IC, AP, and their partners, to inform framework adaptation and development of future JRFs and learning agendas
- The wider USAID/DRC Mission staff members to inform cross-sectoral programming and programming around protected areas as anchor institutions in DRC
- Communities in the region, to foster transparency and accountability
- USAID's external bilateral, regional, and international partners and key stakeholders, including participating host country government agencies and other international partners, addressing peace, security, and conservation issues across the Central Africa region to share lessons learned

II. EVALUATION DESIGN AND METHODS

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The CRCA performance evaluation seeks to answer four primary evaluation questions and related sub-questions:

1) To what extent is CRCA on the path to meeting its overall intended goals and each of its objectives in line with the theory of change?
    a. What were the notable areas of progress the activity achieved in support of its objectives and goals? Response should include consideration of early warning systems, trauma-related programming, the extent to which the latter conforms with international best practices and is achieving results, livelihoods, social cohesion, and community support for conservation.
    b. What were some of the challenges faced in meeting the intended goals, objectives, and results? These should include technical, project management, personnel, logistical political and other issues as relevant. How effectively has Invisible Children dealt with those challenges? What can be changed to better meet goals and objectives?
2) To what extent were the different needs of men and women and marginalized groups addressed in this activity?
    a. Did addressing gender and marginalization improve outcomes? If so, in what ways?
    b. To what extent did women and marginalized groups (e.g., people with disabilities, pastoralists, Indigenous Peoples, ethnic minorities) participate in substantive roles? What (if any) are the barriers and constraints to their participation? What (if any) factors specifically enhanced participation for women and marginalized groups? Have there been any (positive or negative) unintended consequences of their participation?
3) In what ways has coordination and collaboration (both conservation and peace and security programming, and among the three activities that are part of the JRF) been successful and/or faced challenges?
    a. How has CRCA coordinated and collaborated with other activities that are part of the JRF?
    b. Has coordination and collaboration contributed to improved outcomes?
4) Are there any urgent gaps, within or beyond project scope, that need to be addressed to effectively meet the project's goals? If so, what are recommendations for how these needs can be addressed?

The JRF assessment seeks to answer the following questions:

1) What have been the key challenges and successes in implementing the JRF to date?
    a. How has the JRF facilitated integrated programming?
    b. What has/not worked well regarding coordination and collaboration between the three activities and their implementing partners, as well as between conservation and peacebuilding programs? For which sub-IRs has collaboration been most effective and why?
    c. What has/not worked well regarding the "anchor" model (i.e., utilizing protected area programming for community development benefits)? What lessons learned are there for replicating this model with other parks?
2) What indicators or other measures within the JRF have been most effective to communicate and demonstrate evidence of integrated programming benefits to different sectoral stakeholders?
    a. What additional indicators might be missing from the JRF, if any?

3) What benefits (if any) have there been as a result of integration, both within activities (of conservation and peace and security programming) and between the three activities, in relation to conservation and peace and security?
    a. Did the EWS information sharing mechanisms contribute to the efforts of the biodiversity conservation partners in the region to combat illegal wildlife killings and traffic?
    b. In what ways have the protected areas contributed to the success or otherwise of CRCA?

TEAM COMPOSITION

The ET includes expertise in evaluation methods, peacebuilding and conflict mitigation, conservation, and biodiversity. No team member focused exclusively on any one issue, rather interviews and analysis were carried out jointly. The team had extensive experience in DRC as three out of the four members conducting fieldwork are Congolese and the fourth, Dr. Theodore Trefon, has completed 95 missions to the country. The team combined deep subject-matter expertise with a comprehensive understanding of the local context. All members of the evaluation team participated in evaluation design, analysis, and reporting jointly. All members of the ET, except for the remote peacebuilding expert, also participated in fieldwork. The ET was supported by dedicated staff members of the INRM mechanism. A description of all ET and INRM support team members, as well as specific roles and responsibilities, can be found in Annex A.

The team's Conservation Expert, Noël Kabuyaya, passed away from cardiac arrest on the 29th of June in Bangui, CAR near the conclusion of data collection after carrying out 47 days of evaluation fieldwork. Noël was a critical member of the ET, whose insights, mentoring, and diligent field work provided significant benefits to this evaluation. Noël passed away at the very end of the field mission, so his insights and expertise are fully integrated in the current report.

EVALUATION APPROACH

The ET primarily utilized qualitative methods to answer both the CRCA Evaluation and JRF Assessment questions. The evaluation design considered and accounted for the extremely remote geography of project implementation, the wide range of stakeholders involved with or impacted by the activity, and the need to integrate frequently marginalized perspectives in evaluations—including those of women and ethnic and religious minorities. This evaluation comprised a desk review of project and non-project literature and a 47-day fieldwork period in DRC and CAR. During fieldwork, the field team conducted qualitative data collection. Depending on the context, the field team conducted Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), Small-Group Interviews (SGIs), or Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with key stakeholders. Participatory observation and informal conversations were nearly as valuable to the ET as formal interviews.

Desk Review

The ET conducted a thorough desk review of all relevant and available project and non-project documentation that contextualizes and describes the implementation of the CRCA Activity and the JRF. This documentation includes reports, workplans, and Monitoring Evaluation and Learning (MEL) plans, and disseminated products. The ET utilized this documentation to inform the evaluation design and contextualize findings. A list of all project and non-project documents reviewed is provided in Annex B.

Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

The field team engaged in a 47-day fieldwork period in the Mbomou-Uélé region of DRC and CAR to conduct in-person qualitative data collection in the form of KIIs, SGIs, and FGDs. The field team spoke to a variety of key stakeholders including USAID staff, IPs, community leaders, project beneficiaries, and community members external to the project. Most of the interviewing time was spent in DRC (Kinshasa and towns and villages in Haut and Bas Uélé), but the field team also spent 12 days in Bangui and Chinko

National Park in CAR. Although the ET intended to spend more time in Chinko, travel logistics, including delayed flights, limited the time available in this region. The TL devoted the final four days of his stay in Bangui dealing with the police, logistics, and diplomatic obligations relating to the death and repatriation to DRC of team member Noël Kabuyaya.

KIIs served as the primary method of data collection. KIIs provided an opportunity for the ET to explore topics in-depth and at-length with a respondent and mitigate response bias by providing an opportunity for an individual to speak without observation from their peers. KIIs were utilized across stakeholder types given the potentially sensitive nature of the interviews. The ET was especially mindful of local circumstances and customs, attempting to ensure coverage of a wide breadth of stakeholders and mitigation of response bias due to social pressure on respondents.

SGIs of two to three participants supplemented KIIs in situations where respondents had limited time available and were subject to minimal social pressure. Situations where SGIs were utilized include interviews with USAID/DRC Mission staff, IP staff, and *les notables* (elders and village chiefs).

Larger FGDs of four or more participants were conducted sparingly. The ET strived to minimize the use of FGDs as they could obscure marginalized perspectives to a greater extent than KIIs, while posing a heightened COVID-19 transmission risk. In these regions of DRC and CAR, FGDs are often culturally inappropriate or would only prompt a single, dominant answer reflective of inter- and intra-community power dynamics. Keeping in mind these limitations, the ET prioritized smaller interviews but conducted FGDs with prominent figures in villages.

All four team members participated in the interviews, with the team lead (TL) leading the discussion. The TL typically posed questions in French, which were translated to Lingala by one of the team members if that was preferred by the respondent. All team members participated in note taking, and the entire team would convene to write up notes together, usually the same day the interview took place.

Sampling and Stakeholder Engagement

The ET primarily employed a purposive sampling methodology to select respondents based on their ability to provide diverse and detailed perspectives on the CRCA Activity and JRF. Respondents were selected by the ET from a list of stakeholders and potential respondents prepared with support from USAID and IC. The success of the evaluation relied on the ability of the ET to investigate and illuminate the perspectives of broad categories of stakeholders. The ET surveyed six main stakeholder types, including Government and Ministry representatives, USAID staff, IP staff, village leaders (including village chiefs and their *notables* or advisors), village prominent figures (such as schoolteachers and religious leaders), and direct project beneficiaries. The field team spoke to stakeholders in Kinshasa as well as in the Ango, Dungu, and Faradje areas of DRC, including Garamba National Park, and Bangui and Chinko Reserve in CAR. The field team selected these areas to visit a diverse sample of activity implementation sites while keeping security and logistics constraints in mind. Specifically, from the list of IC intervention villages, the ET constrained the list the villages that were in areas considered safe to visit and within one day travel of the four field locations (Dungu, Ango, Faradje, and Chinko). In the DRC, the ET then performed stratified random sampling of the target villages to ensure a range of implementation level in the sample. For Chinko, the ET coordinated closely with AP and IC to identify villages that were safely accessible during the field visits.

Data Collection Logistics

The ET worked with USAID/DRC, AP, and IC to plan and schedule data collection events. The ET scheduled interviews with USAID, government staff, IPs, and other donor respondents via email. For interviews in villages, the ET attempted to schedule meetings with village leaders in advance, if possible, by phone through collaboration with IC and AP.

The ET was well-accustomed to traveling in these areas and worked closely with the DAI, SI, AP, and IC security teams to ensure safe and efficient travel to field sites. The field team brought all necessary equipment to conduct data collection. The team's travel and transportation relied on plane, SUV, motorbike, and foot travel. The TL had a satellite phone, Global Positioning System (GPS), additional power banks, solar panels, and water filters. Additionally, the team followed strict Covid-19 Risk Mitigation protocols throughout the course of fieldwork.

Data Analysis

The TL oversaw and managed systematic analysis of evaluation data both during and after fieldwork. Data analysis was conducted by thematically triangulating findings across interviews and discussions. The team continually compiled, cross-checked, and supplemented qualitative data as they were collected to converge on key findings and conclusions.

During fieldwork, the field team held regular debrief meetings to discuss, synthesize, and build consensus on emerging findings based on responses received from each stakeholder and the field notes. Additionally, the ET and INRM management team held weekly calls to discuss collection progress and early patterns, discrepancies, and findings.

BIASES AND OTHER LIMITATIONS

As this is primarily a qualitative study, data are subject to potential biases, including recall bias, response bias, and selection bias.

During interviews, respondents were asked to recall events or rely on their memories. Beneficiaries may have responded to questions posed by the ET with answers that blended their experiences into a composite memory. Moreover, perceptions may have changed over time, and the ability to remember specific details may fade. Informants may have also been motivated to provide responses that would be considered socially desirable or influential in obtaining continued or increased USAID or IP support, including project funding or resources. Respondents may have believed that negative evaluation findings could result in reduced assistance. Similarly, respondents who were not comfortable may not have wanted to share true findings with the field team. To mitigate this bias, the informed consent script clarified the independent and objective nature of the evaluation to respondents, emphasizing that personally identifiable information was fully kept confidential to the greatest extent possible. The field team had extensive experience in conducting interviews and creating comfortable interviewing environments. As previously noted, the field team aimed to primarily conduct individual interviews, so respondents were not influenced by added participants. Moreover, data triangulation served as a form of quality control to detect response outliers.

Lastly, the ET employed purposive sampling to determine interview participants due to logistical constraints. This limited the extent to which the sample is representative of all stakeholders and beneficiaries. To mitigate this selection bias, the ET worked with USAID/DRC to identify all relevant USAID and IP stakeholders. Though the ET had to consider accessibility in village selection, they also had to ensure that the sample was as representative as possible. The field team ensured that saturation was reached by conducting as many interviews as necessary to hear diverse and comprehensive viewpoints. Team members also strived to interview project beneficiaries that represented diverse demographic groups, considering gender and other social characteristics.

Aside from biases, the evaluation and assessment were limited by logistical hurdles inherent in conducting fieldwork in such remote areas. It was not possible for the field team to visit all implementation areas, and the team experienced unforeseen barriers to visiting intended villages upon arrival in DRC and CAR. The field team worked to visit field locations that were as representative as possible of all implementation areas as permitted by regional travel and other logistic considerations. The COVID-19 pandemic created

heightened existing logistical obstacles. However, the proven regional experience of each member of the field team and willingness to adapt to the circumstances encountered during the study ensured a high-quality evaluation and assessment.

These logistical limitations were heightened by frequent flight delays, COVID quarantine and testing requirements, and especially the death of an ET team member – Noël Kabuyaya, the team conservation expert. The team faced delays in flights five times during their fieldwork operations, resulting in a total of ten days on standby. Along with quarantine requirements, this forced the team to reschedule several interviews and, in some cases, to cancel them. The team was, however, able to replace most interviews with individuals working/living in nearby villages and was able to reformat many interviews with USAID, IC, and AP stakeholders to phone and virtual interviews. However, an obstacle for the team to overcome was the death of Mr. Kabuyaya in the final days of fieldwork. His contributions to the evaluation were largely completed prior to his death. These significant challenges are reflective of the complex operating conditions and are important context for understanding the project implementation and evaluation findings. The ET was unable to visit a wide panoply of sites in which CRCA activities are implemented – which is normal for such a USAID field evaluation - but consider that our exposure was sufficient to put forward the main findings and conclusions in the report given the consistency of reported findings across stakeholders.

III. FINDINGS

The ET acknowledges that CRCA's IRs are the same as the JRF's IRs. However, CRCA contributes directly to IRs 2-6 yet all results contributing to IR 1 (strengthening capacity for wildlife conservation in GNP, CNR, and other protected areas) are from GCPA. This evaluation is focused on IRs 2-5 which corresponded directly to the activities. For IR6 (Implementation of IR 1 to IR 5 continually informed by ongoing research, analysis, and coordination), CRCA conducts regular research and analyses which inform the interventions including EWS products, conflict analysis, and other products.

CRCA EQ 1: TO WHAT EXTENT IS CRCA ON THE PATH TO MEETING ITS OVERALL INTENDED GOALS AND EACH OF ITS OBJECTIVES IN LINE WITH THE THEORY OF CHANGE?

1A: What are the notable areas of progress the activity has achieved in support of its objectives and goals?

IR 2: Communities are enabled to mitigate and adapt to security and conservation threats

CRCA has been able to support the prevention of violent conflict and adaptation to threats, although more progress was made on adaptation than prevention. Violent conflict and other forms of violent criminality remain in the Mbomou-Uélé transborder region - as described in the background section of this report. As the dynamics of violence shift regularly, inter- and intra-community communication is crucial. This communication also represents a significant source of moral support for the isolated communities living in the region that have violence in their individual and collective memories.

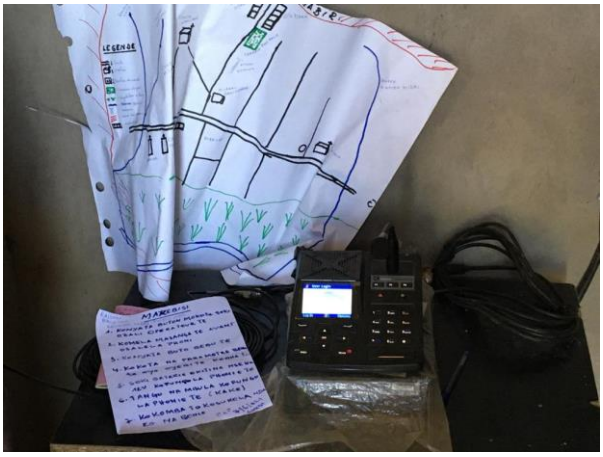
The most notable contribution to preventing and adapting to violence is the support of an EWS that allows communities to share information about threats. The EWS was put in place by communities with the help of IC and its partners to deal with possible threats from armed groups, including the LRA. The EWS works through High Frequency radio networks. Concretely, this means that if unfriendly armed groups are seen in the vicinity of a given village, that village can communicate with other villages to caution them of imminent threats and simultaneously request help from the police, military, and rangers.

As of October 2020, IC provided 170 HF radios to communities, connecting them to regional information hubs.[28] IC also provides the necessary solar panels and cables to keep the radios functioning, along with training operators – which can be seen in Figure 3 below. In the CRCA FY21 Q3 Quarterly Report, IC reported the creation of localized Community Action Plans (CAPs) in 110 communities, resulting in 255 cases of improved inter-community intra-community coordination in response to security threats. IC also reports that, as of June 30, 2021, a total of 1255 FM radio episodes were produced, and 3442 episodes were broadcasted. Additionally, a total of 1272 timely security alerts provided to key stakeholders via EWS platforms were reported.

[28] Invisible Children CRCA annual report 2020, p. 8.

"Community capacity to deal with and anticipate security issues has been enhanced thanks to the CRCA EWS." – USAID respondent	"The most obvious CRCA success is IR 2. Thanks to the radio network, local communities can communicate with park rangers to inform them of the presence of armed groups. Rangers force these groups out of the area – in other words, local communities have a direct impact on illegal hunting." – USAID respondent

FIGURE 3. HIGH FREQUENCY RADIO EQUIPMENT AND SHED



Source: Invisible Children

Community action plans

EWS is associated with the CAP, which are community safety plans initiated by IC that can be triggered by the EWS. There is a close link between the CAP and the EWS. It is through information transmitted by the EWS that communities are able to prevent security threats in their environment. This information reaches communities through frequency modulation (FM) radio (where available), voice, and is also echoed through traditional whistles or drums. The CAP uses a system of codes to send messages within the community, and according to one KI from Dungu, 'each member of the community has already mastered these codes; each time we hear one or two whistles, we know what they refer to and what action to take. Depending on the threat, such as the sighting of an armed group in the area, and so everyone can already take steps to protect themselves and the other members of their community.'

The EWS and CAP include identifying areas in and around villages that can be used as a refuge in case of an attack while waiting for outside help. IC reportedly accompanies communities in the identification of refuge areas through participatory mapping. The ET was not able to verify this claim despite making requests in beneficiary villages (in and around Bandueli, Bas-Uélé).

Historical context

The success of the EWS and the entire HF communication system is based on existing structures that pre-date the colonial period. Community radios, run mainly by Catholic missionaries, were used extensively during Belgian colonial rule. Similar networks have been supported by Caritas and Catholic Relief Services. Modern communication technology for EWS is based on traditional 'talking drums' (also known as slit drums or African log drums), photographed in Figure 4. Use of these traditional drums was

combined with runners who would run from one village to the next to provide news and information. This historic background highlights traditional resilience strategies in the region.

FIGURE 4. TRADITIONAL TALKING DRUM

Source: Invisible Children

Impact

> "Community capacity to deal with and anticipate security issues has been enhanced thanks to the CRCA EWS." – USAID respondent

From both formal interviews and informal conversations during the fieldwork, a broad consensus was voiced that this contribution was the most significant result of CRCA. According to a Peace Committee member in Ango, 'the CAP is a tool par excellence that allows our community to protect itself. It is even within this context that it is recommended that people, especially women, do not go to their fields alone.' The same KI indicated that it is within the framework of the CAP, with the support of the EWS, that they managed to mitigate the threat of some Mbororo herders who prevented members of their community from fishing. IC reports also include multiple examples of uses of the EWS by communities to communicate about threats.

Successful and innovative examples of implementation of the EWS include: (i) when communities cross the border between CAR and DRC, they sometimes take their HF radio(s) with them, continuing to be part of the EWS in the area of refuge; (ii) the EWS monitors forced displacement supported by the Crisis Tracker; (iii) CRCA uses its WhatsApp group alerts to distribute information about population movements to relevant regional stakeholders; and (iv) CRCA and IC personnel are in close and regular contact with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to alert.

ET interviews found that many communities that do not have radios request them, and those that already have them ask for improvements, such as upgrading the radios and sheds used to house them. In some cases, the presence of a radio can backfire: the ET heard reports of isolated communities with radios who were threatened by LRA attacks because LRA sought to break communication links (Informal conversation with a KI in Bayule, a village outside of Ango). The ET notes that IC has robust protocols in place to deal with such possible contingencies and to minimize the likelihood of these risks. There are, however, problems of maintenance and breakdowns, though it is important to note that CRCA conducts regular maintenance and maintenance training, recognizing that the implementation conditions are harsh on electronic equipment. GCPA noted in their year fourannual work plan that IC technicians have travelled to areas like Chinko to repair the radios as they have broken down with the goal of maintaining the EWS network. Nevertheless, a respondent in Ango (Bas Uélé) declared that these problems were frequent and

could take months to resolve. Conversely, we learned of one village in which people contributed money to purchase new electric cables (Bandueli village, Bas Uélé).

Sustainability

The community reliance and acceptance of EWS is likely to ensure its sustainability even after donor support terminates, although its use has evolved over time. A respondent from an implementer in GNP notes, 'The radio network is a success for people but serves more to keep them informed about personal affairs than transmitting alerts. In fact, the need to transmit security alerts is increasingly rare. There have been none so far in 2021 in our area. The radio system is also useful in sharing information about the Mbororo who cause problems for our farmers and other community members.' Such use strengthens community ownership, raises the status and profile of operators and enables Peace Committees to raise small amounts of money from within the community, thereby contributing to the maintenance and sustainability of the system. It is also possibly the case that the radios are used more for security alerts in more remote areas that the ET was unable to visit.

Wildlife Protection

There is evidence that CRCA has contributed to protecting wildlife from armed group exploitation. A caveat, however, is that the activities of armed groups have lessened since the start of CRCA – there have been notably fewer LRA incursions. IC cited the reduction in the presence of the LRA and violent attacks from the group in their Q15 report, which they attribute, in part, to the rainy season. This makes it difficult to establish a direct causal link between diminished threats to wildlife and CRCA efforts. Nevertheless, the ET heard from different KIs that improved communication between villagers and park rangers, thanks to the HF radio system, disrupted and discouraged professional, well-armed, politically well-connected poachers (AP staff). The Catholic Church is also an important conveyor of poaching threats between IC and the GNP through its own HF radio network and community actions.

Bushmeat Consumption

There is conflicting evidence about the impact of CRCA on bushmeat consumption. On the one hand, awareness campaigns may have influenced people's attitudes about hunting and law enforcement. A radio operator reported: "Radio messaging, training sessions and memory cards keep people up to date. Before, when a hunter returned to his village with game, he would display it proudly. Now, he is more careful with it for fear of getting into trouble and because of possible social stigma". A respondent that works for AP added: "awareness focusses on making legal requirements known and understood." However, in both Chinko and Garamba rangers commented that they do not adamantly pursue subsistence hunters, being stricter about bushmeat hunting for commercial purposes. An AP staff member confirmed that: "To maintain decent relations with communities in and around Garamba we are sometimes forced to close our eyes when we see minor violations."

Subsistence bushmeat consumption is a big part of the daily lives of many people in the CRCA space. While it is an ongoing potential threat to conservation efforts, it is also part of traditional food security habits. Helping communities sustainably management their wildlife populations is therefore an important priority towards the achievement of contributing to community resilience. In contrast to other Congolese provinces where bushmeat is consumed more than once a week, in both Bas-Uélé (in Ango) and Haut-Uélé Province (in Dungu, Nagero, Faradje), bushmeat consumption is reportedly rare. Conversations revealed that animal populations are diminishing. They also revealed that in this region (populated largely by the Azande) people seem to be more interested in farming than in hunting. Although it may seem contradictory, the ET did observe small quantities of bushmeat in markets, mostly smoked but sometimes fresh (as in the Dungu market). The ET observed fresh buffalo, bushpig and large antelopes such as waterbuck. The presence of fresh meat means that the bushmeat comes from hunting areas close to the

city. A community development expert told us that 'eating beef is a luxury in the area'. In fact, beef is nearly twice as expensive as bushmeat in Dungu.

Anti-Poaching

In the framework of CRCA and CBCWT, IC and AP are conducting wildlife protection and anti-poaching awareness activities in the Mbomou-Uélé region. This is done through radio broadcasts, audio messages shared on memory cards, and mobile cinema. In recent months, because of Covid-19, the mobile cinema activities were curtailed, with reduced numbers of participants. The EWS contributes to the transmission of anti-poaching messages in and around Garamba. In the event of poacher attacks in the villages, people send alerts to the rangers or the "regular forces" (army and police).

AP (with GCPA funding) has a two-pronged approach to combat poaching. Both are relevant to CRCA because they are examples of the integrated approach of the JRF. One, awareness campaigning and a minimal use of force to enforce the law regarding hunting - arrests and/or prosecution of poachers or traffickers- and two, the implementation of community development projects. It is within this second framework that AP is promoting beekeeping and sustainable agriculture through farmer field schools (*champ-école paysan*) for market gardening and food crops, poultry vaccination to reduce mortality and disease, and fish farming (this is in the start-up phase).

Threats to Wildlife

Despite these positive conservation efforts, which AP can control to a certain extent, there are two significant threats to wildlife that lie beyond the scope of AP's capacity and mandate. One, the presence of transhumant pastoralists (Mbororo) who are increasingly present in the area. According to people interviewed in Bas-Uélé, the Mbororo destroy forest ecosystems and kill certain animal species (from small rodents to large predators) to accommodate the grazing needs and protection of their herds. While cattle overgrazing can provoke land degradation of pasturelands, the real impact on the Mbororos is unclear. Unsustainable slash-and-burn agricultural practices are likely a much greater threat in the region. Through high-level diplomacy in CAR-Sudan and South Sudan, Chinko has made progress in channelling the Mbororo along peripheral corridors to avoid herding in the core zones of the park (respondent from Chinko Park). This diplomatic progress, however, has disrupted traditional corridors and, as a result, is threatening herders' livelihoods in the Mbomous and Haute-Kotto, who now have to travel far greater distances to get to markets.

Two, gold and diamond mining (both formal/industrial and informal/artisanal) in/near both Garamba and Chinko is an increasing threat to both the fauna and flora of the region because mining attracts migrants seeking work. Mining disrupts ecosystems and puts pressure on forest resources for fuelwood, building materials and bushmeat. Logging and slash-and-burn agriculture are also conservation threats in the Mbomou-Uélé region.

IR 3: Develop safe and sustainable livelihood opportunities

IC appears to have been less successful in terms of improving sustainable livelihoods. Initiatives tend to be under-conceptualized and spread out too thinly. The small-scale development projects proposed by IC have minimal identified impact at the local level, particularly with regard to poverty reduction at the level of the family unit. The evidence collected during this evaluation suggest that IC does not have the required human resources to address this objective, which is reflected in IC's annual reports. This is a longstanding conundrum for the development community: livelihood support is a standard part of any development and conservation agenda but at the same time, experience shows that it is extremely difficult to improve livelihoods in areas that are underdeveloped, threatened by physical insecurity, under-equipped in terms of road and communication infrastructure, characterized by limited state support, and in many cases, reluctance on the part of communities to change their traditional behaviors. There are consequently few possibilities for wealth creation in the Mbomou-Uélé transborder region.

As of June 30, 2021, IC reports supporting 30 alternative livelihood micro-projects in DRC and an additional 15 in CAR. In the CRCA FY21 Q3 report, the share of participants that report improved interactions between groups experiencing livelihoods-related intercommunal tension ranged from 17-41 percent. IC reports that 31 people have improved economic benefits derived from sustainable natural resource management and/or biodiversity conservation as a result of United States Government (USG) assistance. Additionally, the share of microprojects participants who perceive projects to be effective in reducing their community's exposure to security threats ranged from 27-41percent

However, the IC sustainable livelihoods initiatives in the areas visited by the ET are largely limited to the provision of goats for raising and do not seem to be based on sufficient economic and market analysis. The ET acknowledges that IC has reported carrying out other livelihood projects, but we did not have the opportunity to visit them, and interviews with stakeholders from a variety of perspectives support similar experiences to those observed by the ET. In the communities that are already benefiting from the initiative, IC has given goats (about 30 in the case of Bandueli and Kurukwata) with the hope that they will be able to reproduce, and once they have multiplied the communities can distribute them to potential breeders – a system referred to as metayage. Although the theory is sound, the ET found little to no evidence that the approach led to community development or income generation in practice, in part because they did not advance beyond the preparatory stage. The primary issue is that people in these communities rarely consume goat meat, so these efforts do not meaningfully contribute to livelihood development or food security. Goats in these villages are not monetized; instead, they are used for prestige gifts, paying fines, or paying bride wealth. Goat raising is unlikely to dissuade people from continuing their former subsistence activities (hunting in particular). This raises the important point about alternative development strategies. While people may in some cases accept a new activity, they rarely abandon another economic activity: the alternative in other words becomes a complementary activity. In the villages visited, the goats given to the communities are still managed by the members of the Peace Committees set up by IC; to date, they have not been distributed to the members. Although the ET was not able to verify during field work or with other respondents, IC reports to be moving ahead in other livelihood-improvement initiatives, relating, for example, to micro-credit, agricultural extension, and road maintenance.

Discussions with members of the Ango Peace Committee, clarified that goat projects in Bas-Uélé do not meet the needs of the communities. Before initiating these activities, IC had preliminary discussions with the local communities to hear their needs and expectations. One member of the Peace Committee told us that they had requested the acquisition of a paddy rice hulling machine in 2018. The aim was to help community members process the rice they already produce, as currently, they cannot process it due to the lack of a hulling machines. However, after requests to know the reason for the delay in the execution

of this project, Peace Community members were informed two years later that the project was shelved and that another micro-project was to be executed in their area, which led one KI to declare: 'IC is playing around with us'. Another KI was unequivocal about IC's limited capacity in improving livelihoods: 'IC doesn't have the technical skills to deal with livelihood projects. They need to either reinforce or scale out.' Indeed, IC has not hired any trained economists to contribute to their livelihood activities. The ET acknowledges that economic needs in Bas-Uélé are enormous and that the scope, scale, and budget of CRCA's IR 3 make meeting the needs and managing expectations of the communities difficult.

Conversely, the ET found the community development approach being implemented by AP in the GNP was targeted, not overly ambitious, seemed to be based on meaningful discussions with community members and livelihood and socio-economic surveys. They already seemed to be generating positive benefits. Details are developed in the section on GCPA and CBCWT.

The ET found evidence of successful livelihood development activities without any formal external support. An association in Faradje helps single mothers and other vulnerable women and men learn to sew - Réseaux Communautaires pour le Développement Durable (RECODDU). The ET spoke with an LRA escapee who had been reunited with his family and was following the training. RECODDU is a convincing example of self-sufficiency and grass-roots resilience because the association receives no donor funding. The participants need to have their own sewing machine (usually paid for by family members), but the training course costs only $80 and lasts 6 months.

IR 4: Recognize and recover from violence-induced trauma

> The CRCA Critical Assumption that escapees from armed groups are efficiently and appropriately supported and reunited with their families has not been met. Through awareness sessions and staff training, some community members are informed about CRCA's interest in trauma healing. Nevertheless, the ET was not made aware of any significant concrete actions at a broad scale.

Violence is not new to the region, and communities have consistently found strategies to remain resilient. The atrocities committed by LRA, however, were overwhelming and tested community resilience. Consequently, the CRCA intervention was timely and important. EWS and communication networks helped people accept that they suffered from LRA atrocities. Trauma was no longer a personal burden to keep for oneself but something that became part of the community. IC trained social workers at the community level who support victims of all kinds of conflict – their main work concerns domestic violence (IC respondent in Ango). However, the support for victims of armed conflict is superficial and partial. IC notes that they have limited resources to do all that would be needed to deal with trauma healing. They work at the community level in group sessions targeting individuals without obvious mental health symptoms, with the objective of increasing the capacity of participants to identify and accept mental health issues, as well as to prevent the emergence of future pathological mental health issues. This basic intervention enables, at the community level, the identification of individuals with trauma who can then receive either intermediary intervention delivered in a single patient setting by psychological care officers, as well as referral pathways for more complex cases to trained psychologists in a clinical setting. The crucial next step, however, of helping trauma victims become independent community members with skills and livelihood options was not clearly demonstrated throughout the evaluation.

As of June 30, 2021, IC reports the creation of 43 Community Counsellor Teams (CCTs) in CAR and DRC, which provide trauma healing seminars at the community level. A total of 165 CCT members were reported trained in the CRCA FY2021 Q3 report. Additionally, 1420 people were reported as benefitting from trauma healing seminars, and 542 people were referred to CCTs.

The ET had difficulty in establishing the real impact of the IC contribution to trauma-related activities in the communities visited. This is admittedly a very challenging endeavor, especially in such a difficult

environment. One important accomplishment of this effort is reflected in the fact that approximately 800 out of 1200 patients note a reduction in trauma symptoms (as reported by IC's monitoring data). Better progress is reported by IC to have been made in eastern CAR where the ET was unable to visit. IC has had serious and recurring difficulty in recruiting and retaining competent psychologists and psychosocial workers. A KI from IC admitted that: "our big problem in dealing with trauma-related work is recruiting competent staff – the recruitment pool is limited, and qualifications are low." This problem was also articulated by a KI in Dungu: "The people who designed CRCA had lofty ambitions concerning psychological support but seriously underestimated the challenge of identifying, recruiting and maintaining qualified staff members." The main issue here is the absence of local qualified staff and the unwillingness of outsiders to relocate to these remote places. While training sessions and awareness campaigns may have been carried out (as presented in IC's annual reports), KIs repeated that these activities had very little impact. One KI considers that "IC has a great communication strategy but in terms of concrete actions, they're blind." Despite these limitations, there are qualified, full-time mental health and psychosocial support staff based at four separate hospitals, providing communities the ability to receive support in serious cases.

Some good was accomplished by finding foster families for LRA escapees or other victims of violence, with IC reporting that they have provided support to 227 escapees, mostly through non-USG funding. However, the good was viewed by a variety of stakeholders as superficial because there was little meaningful follow up after placement in these families. A KI from IC in Ango commented: "There is a big need to provide sustained support for girls having escaped from the LRA. They receive some initial support but no concrete help in improving their livelihoods." A similar sentiment was expressed by another KI in Ango: "It seems that IC is doing decent work, but they need to think harder about the real needs of our community. Without providing education and integration of refugees, the work won't really help," On a more positive note, an IC respondent in Dungu expressed the opinion that IC's work with LRA escapees has the advantage of helping parents and children re-establish trust within the family. Trust had suffered because families were well aware of the atrocities committed by LRA child soldiers and could have associated their children with these atrocities.

The ET reviewed training material for trauma-healing training sessions provided by IC. We found them to be superficial, reliant on copy-pasting from other documents, and ill-adapted to the local reality. This again reveals the difficulty that IC has in dealing with very complex psychosocial problems. The low-level of this material reflects the level of the staff who did not convince the ET that they were able to grasp the complexity of trauma healing.

IR 5: Peacefully transform intercommunal conflicts

> The ET found IC's efforts to transform intercommunal conflicts to be ineffective - the same problems outlined for IR 4 apply here as well. The ET feels that IC accepted too ambitious of a challenge, which may reflect donor pressures. Firstly, staff at the local level do not appear to have the conceptual skill sets and expertise for this work in the regional context and second, the magnitude of the regional problems lay beyond the scope and resources of CRCA.

The ET acknowledges that CRCA has a reasonably sound theoretical basis for their efforts to transform intercommunal conflicts. Moreover, IC has reported some successes. Specifically, IC reported training 120 community members as local mediators and holding 150 peacebuilding events. In the CRCA FY2021 Q3 report, IC notes that 30 participatory conflict assessments were conducted in communities targeted for conflict mitigation. Additionally, 88 United States Government USG-funded events, trainings, or activities were designed to build support for peace or reconciliation among key actors to the conflict.

However, based on interviews with KIs and field observations, the ET finds little evidence of significant impacts in this area – again, in part, given overwhelming social, cultural, economic and security challenges. Respondents in Bangui and Kinshasa expressed the opinion that IC's work in this area was lagging in concrete results. A clear distinction needs to be made between conducting workshops and awareness campaigns versus transforming the drivers of intercommunal conflict. IC has admittedly done the workshop and awareness campaigns, but the ET was unable to find evidence of moving to the next level of outcomes. Transforming intercommunal violence will require high level diplomatic actions between DRC, CAR, Uganda, Sudan, and South Sudan. The ET is informed by IC that they are using non-CRCA funds for data gathering and analysis generated through CRCA to feed into high level diplomatic efforts by relevant institutions, including peacekeeping missions, embassies, the UN Security Council, United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, and the U.S. Department of State.

At the more local level, CRCA activities can help people, but they can also create conflicts. According to one KI from Bandueli "IC's work leads to jealousy and rivalry. To really help the community, work should focus on health and education. IC pretends to unite people, but once they leave, deep-rooted problems will re-surface." The ET interpreted the statement about problems re-surfacing as an absence of sufficient consultation with communities prior to and during the implementation phases. This is an unavoidable problem in the weak states of Central Africa where people have low expectations of state service provision but unrealistically high expectations of outside partners who are expected to replace the state. Projects have limited objectives in terms of scale, so cannot help everyone. A KI from Ango and others expressed the opinion that IC has not sufficiently engaged with DRC state authorities which would be a necessary step in having an impact on intercommunal violence of the kind described in the above security section of this report. This one voice is far from being unique or anecdotal. The various state authorities the ET interviewed expressed similar discourse. The ET members combine extensive experience working in DRC on various research and evaluation assignments and frequently encountered similar views.

Discrimination acts as a catalyst for intercommunal conflicts, especially gender, ethnic, and sexual orientation discrimination. Power is controlled by married Bantu men with children in rural Congo; they are the elders – 'the wise men' - who arbitrate and judge. They dictate how the community should preserve its past, use its resources and organize its future. Women, children, indigenous Peoples, and vulnerable social groups have little voice. Homosexuality remains taboo. According to the DRC's constitution (article 40): "Every individual has the right to marry the person of their choice, of the opposite sex." There is a constitutional ban on same-sex marriage. Male-dominated social norms are timidly evolving in towns and cities. Urban women are emancipating themselves from these restrictions. The multi-ethnic and cosmopolitan nature of Congolese cities allows women to see how other women are taking charge of their destiny through work, education, church groups, and solidarity networks. Emancipation is emerging in step with timid economic empowerment. Congolese women are important economic actors in both the formal and informal sectors. The emancipation trend, nevertheless, cannot mask the sustained low social status of women where discrimination prevails. Simultaneously, sexual violence and domestic abuse is often seen as normal and acceptable. An indicator of the status of women is their presence in Parliament where only ten percent of parliamentary seats are occupied by women (2019). Low status is the legacy of socially constructed gender roles and discriminatory laws.

1B: What are some challenges faced in meeting the intended goals, objectives, and results?

The ET found that the underdevelopment of the region served as a major challenge to meeting the project's intended goals, objective, and results. In particular, recruiting and retaining qualified staff is an important challenge that the IPs, particularly IC, were unable to fully overcome. Additionally, a lack of infrastructure significantly increases the cost and time required to carry out specific activities. The complexity of social relations was also described as an obstacle in implementing community development.

A USAID respondent expressed a widely held view summarizing the main challenges in meeting CRCA intended goals: "underdevelopment, underdevelopment, underdevelopment." Another USAID respondent said: "The underdevelopment of the region is the umbrella challenge to getting things done." This problem is not unique to CRCA IPs but a problem that other development partners also encounter in the Mbomou-Uélé region. This challenge was directly experienced by the ET through the significant logistical challenges in moving to and around the region. Meanwhile, a respondent from IC was more nuanced, emphasizing both internal and external obstacles:

> "First, there are challenges internal to IC: these include recruitment of competent staff willing to work in the region[29] and keep them on the payroll; there is also a problem of staff leaving IC to work with other Non-Government Organization (NGOs) operating in the region. This results in the need to train and retrain staff with high transaction costs. Second, there are external challenges: there is a high turnover rate of the state actors we need to interact with, so we must start from scratch frequently: establishing new relationships, new awareness sessions, new needs to have documents signed. Third, there are overwhelming infrastructure problems, high transaction costs, absence of reliable state support systems, vehicle maintenance is difficult and costly because of significant wear and tear. Time management is unpredictable and of course everything related to regional insecurity. Forth, the USAID bureaucracy and accounting requirements limit our spontaneity and flexibility in the field."

Multiple respondents corroborated the view that recruiting qualified staff willing to work in the area, since limited capacity exists there already, is difficult, and competent staff tended to use the opportunity as a steppingstone for career advancement.

Informal exchanges with a Catholic priest with experience in the region highlight the absence of a development agenda: "underdevelopment in the Haut and Bas Uélé is flagrant – the State has done very little: These provinces do not exist on the socio-economic map of the DRC. There have been no development initiatives here since independence in 1960 so extreme poverty is rampant. Do communities accept CRCA activities because they really want them or because they accept any initiatives that come their way?" As a general rule in the underdeveloped communities targeted by CRCA people express preferences for immediate and pressing needs such as health, education and infrastructure because those needs are easily understandable to them. Other priorities, such as conservation, are more abstract and therefore less urgent. It is also important to note that the communities the ET was able to visit might not be fully representative of all CRCA communities, particularly more remote or less secure areas. However, the ET believes based on our experience that similar views are likely to be held across the other areas not visited as well.

[29] The ET notes that this specifically refers to the CRCA area of operation more so than the Central Africa region.

The complexity of social relations was described as an obstacle in implementing community development (IC respondent in Nagero). A recurring development challenge is unrealistic expectations on international NGOs and donors when national governments do not fulfil basic needs for people. IC, as with other implementers operating in this context, is not immune to this problem which exacerbates its difficulties in maintaining good relations in communities. The ET heard multiple iterations of the sentiment: "we want health and education more than conservation" – this message can be interpreted as conservation being perceived more as a Western priority than a local one. Communities can be sensitive to conservation and environmental protection because they depend on natural resources, but their day-to-day priorities are about access to safe drinking water, health, education, food, etc. As these are reasonable concerns, USAID may want to consider providing these services either through CRCA, JRF or in future initiatives. Political relations are also complex and difficult to manage. A KI from AP highlighted the problem of State agents being uninformed or under-informed about CRCA and stated: "IC should be more pro-active in engaging with the Congolese State."

CRCA's management structure is another limitation in achieving expected results. This report has repeatedly highlighted the wide gap between IC upper-echelon international management and local field-level staff. Along the same lines, the ET considers that the structure and capacity of the IC Kinshasa office may not be able to deal with demanding management challenges or adequately serve as a lever for implementation of field activities. CRCA's management through its Kinshasa office appears to result in communication problems with field offices. CRCA is a transboundary initiative and requires in-depth and constant engagement with a range of dynamics in the Mbomou-Uélé area. The international dynamics require creativity and flexibility which may be hampered by running CRCA from the distant capital. The ET felt that IC's Kinshasa office was overwhelmed by the significant management requirements of such an ambitious project. This management deficit is a serious handicap to CRCA activity implementation and consequently leads the ET to recommend (see the recommendations section) a reconfiguration of the management structure.

CRCA EQ 2: TO WHAT EXTENT ARE THE DIFFERENT NEEDS OF MEN AND WOMEN AND MARGINALIZED GROUPS ADDRESSED IN THIS ACTIVITY?

The ET found IC's contribution to enhancing gender equity to be only moderately successful. IC articulates an inclusion discourse, but the ET found little evidence that inclusion is implemented throughout CRCA activities. USAID is committed to enhancing gender equality and this is something that CRCA recognizes. Implementing attitude and behavior change on this culturally sensitive issue is extremely complex and requires long-term investment. Although women were able to and did participate in project activities, the ET did not observe a systematic approach – or the analytical rigor – that considered the cultural realities and priorities of women and could lead to the empowerment of women.

The ET recognizes that IC is a women-led organization at a global level and IC has a significant representation of women at senior levels within IC/CRCA. While representation of women in positions of leadership may well lead to gender-sensitive programming, as the ET has observed, there remains a wide gap between programming and attitude and behavior change at the beneficiary level. This is a problem encountered by numerous international partners working in Central Africa. The ET recognizes that IC has adopted a systematic inclusionary approach in theory but based on the field mission and interviews has been unsuccessful in making the link between a theoretical approach and on-the-ground results.

CRCA's main success has been through communication. In this respect, the EWS for example, benefits all members of the communities concerned: alerts are shared by both men and women and support marginalized groups. Community communication is not selective. Likewise, 'the training of radio operators

by IC benefits all of the CRCA/JRF partners' (USAID KI). The effective participation of women in the peace committees is also observed when these women are already respected in their communities. However, the ET found little evidence of a specific strategy or activities targeting women or marginalized groups, nor a sufficient analysis of the cultural context that might underpin such a strategy, For example. the IC 2020 annual report only makes four references to gender and one to marginalized individuals, which could be considered as an indication of their lack of activities focused on the topic.

Although gender roles and marginalization were considered foreign concepts by many community respondents, the fundamental issues of how power is structured within families and communities, and the specific needs or priorities of women, seems to have been neglected by CRCA. Married, elder Bantu men with children dominate society throughout central Africa. Women do a considerable amount of the work in Congolese society, particularly with respect to farming, but they have little social or political power. Congolese tradition values women primarily as wives and mothers and discourages their public engagement.[30] This is a reality, that even the best strategies promoted through external advisory, would have difficulty in shifting. Our discussions with KIs about gender and marginalized groups did not inspire any significant responses. All our discussions relating to vulnerable and marginalized groups revealed a large gap between USAID priorities related to gender and social inclusion and local cultural perceptions. Terms such as "gender" or "marginalized people" appeared to be abstract to our KIs. IC has had only limited success because there have not been sufficient efforts to address cultural dynamics. Gender analysis does not appear to be translating into locally appropriate programmatic responses, despite potential openings, particularly in livelihood activities. The ET team did its utmost to prompt KIs to talk about minorities, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual (LGBTQIA+) individuals, and people living with disabilities but was unsuccessful in receiving much feedback.

Based on the team's extensive experience, local knowledge, and fieldwork, the ET is under the impression that communities in central Africa have their own approaches towards resilience. Widows, for example, who may be considered vulnerable, tend to be very well taken care of by the community. Orphans are generally integrated into the extended family of a deceased parent. Female victims of domestic violence are also often taken care of by their families and communities. Community members organize collective work to help these people (farm, build or repair huts, pay for medication, etc.). Kinship in central Africa is a binding cooperative relationship between individuals and members of the larger lineage group. Kinship contributes to traditional forms of resilience because it involves social obligations and expectations that ensure that no one faces tragedy alone. The ET team was made aware by IC that building on traditional resilience approaches is part of IC/CRCA policy.

[30] USAID (2017), "Midterm Evaluation of Phase III of the USAID Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment." https://carpe.umd.edu/sites/default/files/documentsarchive/2017_USAID_Midterm%20Eval%20of%20Phase%20III%20of%20USAID%20CARPE.pdf

CRCA EQ 3: IN WHAT WAYS HAS COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION (BOTH CONSERVATION AND PEACE AND SECURITY PROGRAMMING, AND AMONG THE THREE ACTIVITIES THAT ARE PART OF THE JRF) BEEN SUCCESSFUL AND/OR FACED CHALLENGES?

This EQ will be responded to in more detail in the JRF section. In summary, the ET found that there was successful coordination and collaboration at the level of the USAID missions in Kinshasa and Bangui where CARPE and the Peace and Security Office work together closely to conceptualize ways in which CRCA, GCPA, and CBCWT could work towards common objectives. At the operational level, there were challenges and gaps in implementation; however, the main coordination and collaboration accomplishment is the work relating to the EWSs.

CRCA EQ 4: ARE THERE ANY URGENT GAPS, WITHIN OR BEYOND PROJECT SCOPE, THAT NEED TO BE ADDRESSED TO EFFECTIVELY MEET THE PROJECT'S GOALS? IF SO, WHAT ARE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HOW THESE NEEDS CAN BE ADDRESSED?

The ET identified the following gaps and considered that designing appropriate actions to fill these gaps will enhance both CRCA and the JRF: project sustainability, the geographic scope of the project and need to extend to other countries in the region, neglect of youth dynamics in project conceptualization, and the presence of gold and diamond mining in the Mboumou-Uélé region.

Sustainability: The ET considers that the EWS and radio systems will outlive CRCA because they are based on longstanding social dynamics and because they have been fully appropriated in communities. However, the ET cannot see activities in IRs 3, 4, and 5 as being sustainable, principally because CRCA does not appear to be on the path to making significant improvements in these areas. We recommend that IC develop an explicit sustainability strategy for these activities which includes a framework for assessing the conditions for sustainability that can be integrated into their M&E system. This data will be important to assessing the likelihood of sustainability and for adaptive management during project implementation.

Geography

Many of the security and conservation problems in the Mbomou-Uélé region have their sources beyond the geographic scope of CRCA and JRF. The Mbororo come from as far away as Chad and travel through Chinko in search of new grazing lands, Sudanese and South Sudanese commercial poachers illegally operate in CAR and DRC and the LRA had its origins in Uganda. Herders who travel to Chinko to practice transhumance during the dry season tend to be Sudanese, while the majority of herders found year-round in the Greater Chinko area are Central African. Chadians found in those areas are almost exclusively cattle merchants. We therefore recommend extending coordination of programming in Uganda, Sudan, and South Sudan, going beyond development programming to also include diplomacy, security, intelligence gathering and law enforcement. The issues are truly regional and need coordinated solutions at a regional level. While these issues are regional and require action at the regional level, such actions need to coincide with local, community-led action.

Youth: Population aged 14 years and younger represents 46 percent of the total DRC population[31] and 43 percent in CAR.[32] Youth in both countries are confronted by numerous problems such as limited access to health and education, under-employment, lack of development incentives and, frequently, a restrictive social environment, especially in rural areas. Youth have the potential to play important roles in achieving CRCA and JRF goals. The ET therefore recommends finding ways to work more closely with youth, especially in community development projects and build on IC's youth-focused initiatives. While CRCA's design does not include core activities that exclusively target youth, CRCA does work to ensure that youth are included in programming. This includes youth representation in local Peace Committees, youth-focused activities under conflict transformation efforts, and the coordination of youth-specific Mobile Cinema.

Artisanal and industrial gold and diamond mining

GCPA and CBCWT project designers did not appear to give adequate attention to the ways in which mining impacts the security context and conservation efforts. Mining sites have a notoriously poor reputation with respect to pressure on forest resources (notably bushmeat). Artisanal goldmining in the Okapi Wildlife Reserve in neighbouring Ituri province is the main threat to wildlife there.[33] Artisanal miners are ecologically disruptive in Chinko, although AP is working with them to relocate (KI in Chinko). The industrial mining site around Durba in Haut Uélé operated by Kibali Gold will put increasing pressure on GNP for bushmeat, fuelwood, and construction materials. Durba is just at the southern limit of the park so proximity facilitates incursions. Kibali is one of Africa's largest gold mines. The GNP management needs to closely monitor these impacts and take actions to mitigate.

GARAMBA CHINKO PROTECTED AREAS AND COMMUNITY-BASED COUNTER WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING

The ET found that GCPA and CBCWT activities were progressing along a pathway of reaching expected objectives. This will likely lead to improvements in conservation efforts and improved security for local communities and local wildlife. AP has taken on long-term and direct responsibility for the rehabilitation of Chinko and GNP in partnership with the governments of DRC and CAR as well as with local communities. GCPA and CBCWT are valuable activities supporting CARPE's objective of strengthening capacity for biodiversity, conservation planning and implementation.

The ET was mandated to carry out a mid-term evaluation of CRCA and an assessment of JRF. The ET was not required to carry out extensive evaluation work on the GCPA or CBCWT projects, as the evaluation scope is focused on CRCA and the JRF as a whole which is about collaboration between GCPA, CBCWT, and CRCA. These findings are based on the six days spent in and around GNP in DRC, two days spent at Chinko HQ, and two days in Bangassou outside of the park to the south in CAR. As IC activities were being implemented in and around GNP, the team focused primarily on CRCA during these days. Findings are also based on KIIs and a review of reports and supporting documents. The evaluation tools did not include specific questions about GCPA or CBCWT but assimilated them in the broader JRF inquiry.

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[31] Democratic Republic of the Congo. UNESCO UIS. (2017, April 12). Retrieved from http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/cd

[32] UNFPA Central African Republic. | United Nations Population Fund. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.unfpa.org/data/CF

[33] IPIS. (2018.) "Okapi Wildlife Reserve: Illegal Sourcing of Gold and Timber." https://ipisresearch.be/publication/okapi-wildlife-reserve-illegal-sourcing-gold-timber/

The AP staff met by the ET were professional, pragmatic, innovative and respectful of the need to strike a balance between rigorous conservation demands and the needs of people living in this complex social environment. AP's Public-Private Partnership contract signed with ICCN is designed to support and build capacities of ICCN to ensure the park's sustainability. CBCWT also has activities in the Bili complex in the DRC along the southern border of CAR, implemented mainly by African Wildlife Foundation (AWF).[34]

Challenges

There are similar challenges amongst the two parks, such as extreme poverty, low levels of human development, security threats, mining and increasing presence of the Mbororo. There are no villages in either park although there are villages in the three hunting areas (Azande, Mondo Missa, and Gangala na Bodio) around Garamba. Hunting and fishing incursions are carried out by people living outside of the parks. Human pressure on Garamba is a result of a main road (the R420), near its southern border running through the park from Dungu to Faradje, as well as the number of mid-sized towns in close proximity to the park (including Dungu, Warsa, Faradje and Aba).

Community development

The ET found evidence that the community development initiatives carried out by AP and a local development partner Organization for Education and Development (OPED) are impactful and relevant. Though we recognize that this work is funded by the EU, it does provide a good example of additional approaches to livelihoods projects in the area. AP has signed agreements with other local NGOs working in the Faradje and Dungu areas. Based on interviews and site visits, the AP/OPED activities around the GNP appear to contribute to the income of local households and reduce pressure on biodiversity. AP/OPED provide communities with seeds and farming tools at the beginning of each season. After the harvest, beneficiary farmers return to OPED the same quantity of seeds provided at the beginning of the agricultural season. This allows OPED to support new beneficiaries. AP/OPED make its staff available to train members of the Farmer Field School (FFS), a series of small community structures with up to 30 members. The FFS's mission is also to support its members with technical and operational advice. The members learn new cultivation methods within the FFS that are designed to improve their yields and diminish slash-and-burn practices. During FFS, farmers are trained on income management and encouraged to plan for the purchase of their own agriculture tools. The ET is aware that AP's community development projects receive substantial EU funding, in addition to funding of similar activities provided by USAID. The ET visited two FFS in Djabir and Mala in the Faradje territory. They specialize in gardening for home consumption (onions, cabbage, eggplant, etc.) and food crops for home consumption and sales (corn, beans, soybeans, etc.). One meaningful example of innovation is the introduction of chia seed cultivation. Villagers are enthusiastic about producing chia seeds because they are high value/low volume (KI in Faradje Djabir). AP was able to secure a Belgian exporter based in Benin as a buyer.

Although the FFS activity only began in September/October 2020, some FFS members are already reaping benefits from their fields and did not hesitate to talk about it openly. Thanks only to the harvests of the first crop year, FFS members from Mala purchased several material goods, including an iron, a large wooden table, a new bicycle, new kitchen utensils, and a solar lamp (KI with farmers in Faradje Mala). This informant reported that life had changed thanks to the support of AP/OPED to his village. His wife admits that thanks to their work they now manage to take care of the health care of the whole family and the school fees of their children.

Fish farming is another AP/OPED proposed initiative but is still in the design and awareness phase in Faradje but more advanced in Aba and Dungu. Fish farming requires technical know-how and inputs such

[34] Due to time, security, and logistical constraints, the ET was not able to go to Bili.

as fingerlings and feed. They are rarely economically viable without expert support. The initiative seems to be more donor-driven, as community members reported to know about fish farming and were willing to participate but have not expressed interest in doing so on their own. Members of the fish farming committee do not appear fully aware of the technical, operational, and financial demands of the activity in these regions. The AP approach encourages communities to dig the ponds and provide basic equipment. AP provides materials and other equipment, training, and technical support. This fish farming activity is implemented by AP following the FFS principle. A photo of a pilot fish farming pond proposed by AP/OPED and located in Mala, Haut Uélé can be seen below in Figure 5.

FIGURE 5. AP/OPED PILOT FISH FARMING POND- MALA, HAUT UÉLÉ

Source: Invisible Children

The ET had very little field exposure to CBCWT work in Chinko because of logistical constraints Other than interviews with Chinko park managers, we had one focus group discussion with fishermen in Bangassou who had followed awareness sessions about sustainable fishing. These sessions consisted of Chinko staff explaining the ill effects of fishing with toxic chemicals and mosquito nets. The initiative is in its initial phase, so we were not able to make a complete assessment. The main message from the FG was that these fishermen were not opposed to the idea of sustainable fishing, but if it had an impact on their catches and earning, then they would be reluctant to respect the guidelines set out by AP (FG in Bangassou). The ET was supposed to interview hunters in Rafai who had received similar information about sustainable hunting, but the trip to Rafai from Bangassou was cancelled due to logistical problems.

Limitations to GCPA design

USAID has laid out a joint set of goals for GNP and Chinko relating to (i) conservation and law enforcement, (ii) infrastructure and management, and (iii) community buy-in for conservation. Given similar challenges in both parks, interventions in each deal explicitly with these priorities. Thanks to this design, the management of Chinko and Garamba, in particular, have clearly strengthened over the past five years, at least partly due to the support from GCPA. However, the ET met with upper management in both parks but was unable to detect any meaningful sense of shared approaches to achieving the goals laid out by USAID, or in their relations with local communities. Additionally, the ET did not have the impression that either park adhered to the umbrella concept of GCPA. Even though both parks are managed by AP, there is a far stronger sense of individual Garamba and Chinko identity that outweighs working under a somewhat artificial conceptual umbrella. Nevertheless, GCPA goals are broad enough to accommodate needs for adaptive management in both parks, but individual park specificities should still be considered as an opportunity to integrate nuanced strategies of each park while still contributing to the GCPA results.

JOINT RESULTS FRAMEWORK

The ET found that the main JRF coordination and collaboration accomplishment was at the level of the USAID missions in Kinshasa and Bangui where CARPE and the Peace and Security Office worked closely together to conceptualize ways in which CRCA, GCPA and CBCWT could work towards common objectives. However, this did not translate as clearly to changes in implementation approach on the ground. Nevertheless, the ET observed a resoundingly strong degree of goodwill by IC, AP, and USAID (and in the case of GNP, the European Commission) to work together in the spirit of a JRF.

The JRF can be considered from two perspectives. First, in its simplest form, it could be looked at as a set of common objectives shared across three activities. Without explicit coordination actions between the three activities, they could still make progress and contribute to the JRF simply by achieving their own activity objectives. In the second perspective, the JRF could be considered a framework for organizing a more integrated program, made up of three coordinated, linked activities. In this way, the coordination, collaboration, and integration of the activities would be expected to improve the efficiency or effectiveness of achievement of the activity, and JRF, objectives. The ET found limited evidence of this level of coordinated effort across the activities. In practice, procurement sensitivities were mentioned as one important challenge to taking a bottom-up approach to designing this type of an integrated program which may have better integrated activities from the start. Although it occurred after the data collection period of this evaluation, USAID has noted that they have made progress on establishing key indicators for the JRF which has helped to increase focus and coordination around key objectives across the activities.

The main JRF success is linked to the EWS discussed above. Communities living in and around the GNP share information about security and poaching with rangers who can respond quickly. There is a valuable partnership between the Congo Armed Forces or Forces Armées de La République Démocratique du Congo and AP rangers in combatting armed groups and poachers in the area. Community involvement has contributed to AP's expanding control of the park and countering illegal activities inside the park. One KI in Nagero noted "in 2013 we controlled 35 percent of the park, today that's increased to around 90 percent." For Chinko, the successful collaboration between IC and AP was highlighted by a KI: "Thanks to the awareness campaigns carried out by IC, AP can work with communities that previously saw AP as an enemy."

Other than KIs from USAID who remain convinced of the relevance of the JRF ToC, the ET did not hear of any real approval or disapproval of the ToC in other discussions. Nevertheless, one AP manager asserted that the ToC, at the high level, was relevant but the sub levels of implementation were theoretical, confusing, and difficult to operationalize. They also are of the opinion that IPs did not really pay much attention to the JRF ToC. While we did not encounter deliberate reluctance, we observed little effort on the part of IPs to improve communication and coordination and did not learn of IPs trying to modify their work patterns because of JRF. As indicated in the recommendations section, the ET suggests that USAID work towards the institutionalization of partner workplans and activities to give greater in-the-field buy-in of the, to date, theoretical ToC.

The ET detected some complacency on the part of USAID regarding the JRF ToC. One KI stated, "security goes hand in hand with the protection of wildlife and the well-being of communities." While the ET agrees with the logic that improved security is good for conservation and improved conservation is good for security, the security context – and specific categories of threats – have shifted significantly since the JRF ToC was articulated. The presence of the Mbororo was not singled out as a problem in the design phase of the JRF. However, both IC and AP have made significant progress in engaging with them, which highlights their adaptability and responsiveness. IC has staff monitoring the Mbororo presence and AP has concretely engaged with their leaders to mutually agree upon transhumance corridors through the Chinko park. Transhumance on the scale being carried out by the Mbororo is a threat to conservation efforts and a

source of tension with local communities. Importantly, the Mbororo can also be beneficial to communities through the sale of beef in local markets, which has provided an alternative to bushmeat in certain areas. It is recommended that this engagement be pursued and scaled up. LRA attacks have diminished in number and intensity; however, problems with the Mbororo are escalating and civil war in CAR is intensifying in the Mbomou Prefecture of CAR (KIs from IC, AP, and USAID). These problems were not considered at the time of JRF design and are reflected in its execution. The Allied Democratic Forces insurgency, a militia group active in North Kivu, has the potential to spread to Haut and Bas Uélé. The arrival of CAR refugees into DRC is already a strain on conservation efforts and could escalate (informal discussion with GNP upper management). A USAID respondent confirmed that: "The Mbororo pastoralist activity in the region was not foreseen and certain opportunities for partnerships with other organizations working in the area were not adequately considered."

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS

CRCA

USAID's initiative to design and implement community resilience support linked to conservation priorities in the remote Mbomou-Uélé region has proven to be meaningful for both human and wildlife populations. CRCA is therefore on track to reaching high-level goals related to security and conservation, but the activity is lacking in results in other objectives. In addition to its innovative integrated approach, USAID's value added through CRCA, is a physical presence in a region largely abandoned by other international partners.

As described in the security and challenges sections above, the area CRCA is working in is raft with problems which impact the implementation of any development initiatives within and beyond the CRCA environment. These include, notably, delays, unexpected obstacles, and extremely high transaction costs for accomplishing even seemingly minor activities which have hindered the work conducted by USAID and its partners. There is clearly a sentiment that through CRCA, people did not feel alone. The ET felt the appreciation for the USAID presence amongst beneficiaries, even though many voiced concerns regarding a lack of concrete development results, including in areas they prioritized that are not directly within CRCA scope, which raises questions about the relevance of the design, or the intensity of resources allocated. These challenges have prevented IC from shifting from an effective awareness-building and training partner to a facilitator for the realization of concrete results that are meaningful to people at a reasonable scale.

IC has achieved meaningful progress on IR 2, mainly through the deployment of HF radios and the EWS; however, objectively verifiable progress leading towards social improvement was limited for IRs 3, 4, and 5. The EWS is, according to a respondent with relevant experience 'the only real CRCA/JRF success achievement.' The ET acknowledges that IC met many of its approved indicator targets, as reported to USAID in the CRCA Quarterly Performance Reports. However, the ET finds these indicators to be primarily based on outputs rather than outcomes. While these indicators and targets provide important benchmarks for activity implementation, they largely fail to capture the effectiveness of the activity in meaningfully improving peoples' lives. Although CRCA succeeded in meeting many of these targets, the ET believes it is crucial to assess the activity in terms of its tangible impacts. Through this lens, the ET was unable to observe meaningful sustainable livelihood outcomes from the initiatives designed or implemented by IC through CRCA. Conversely, the sustainable livelihoods initiatives of AP funded by the EU, as well as the CBCWT, and implemented by a local NGO in Faradje at the outskirts of GNP have been impactful. The evidence shows that CRCA does not have the capacity, expertise, or scope to make an impactful contribution to trauma-related issues or the peaceful transformation of intercommunal violence given IC's institutional expertise, human resources limitations, logistical challenges, and the magnitude of the problem. CRCA's weaknesses in achieving outcome level results for IRs 3, 4, and 5 are not only a result of IC not having the right skill sets; weaknesses are also organizational and stem from what appears as an over reliance on a single IP for a program that is significantly cross-sectoral and integrated. Cross-sectoral, integrated projects by definition require expertise in multiple areas, which, particularly in a context as complex as this one, is often difficult to find in one organization.

CRCA's main success was through the deployment of HF radios and the EWS. People who were direct beneficiaries reported that they felt a sense of increased security following the implementation of these measures. They noted that the radios served more to share personal news than to address security threats because these threats have diminished in number and intensity. Respondents consistently noted that this

work was meaningful, but it was also expensive due to the remote and challenging context. The level of deployment (increasing the density and reach of the radio network) could be scaled up if funding allows.

The ET detected discrepancies between project reporting and direct observations throughout evaluation fieldwork. Field visits did not corroborate the tone of many reports. For example, it is reported that many awareness campaigns were carried out; however, it is unclear if people really heard or understood the messages. The 2020 annual report (p. 10) states: "The micro-projects have been widely appreciated by the communities." The ET finds this to be subjective and contrary to our interviews with KIs. Reporting focuses on achievement of implementation and output targets and results, yet it does not convincingly cover higher level results in nearly the same way. The evidence collected by the ET shows general support for what was reported in terms of implementation. However, we found significantly less evidence of achievement of outcomes or impacts. We find that the lack of indicators, targets, and reporting at this level is a significant deficiency, not allowing for a full picture of project achievements or challenges. The reporting problem could also be a reflection of the way that information trickled up from field staff to mid-to senior level staff who actually write the administrative reports from local staff reports.

GCPA and CBCWT

The ET found that GCPA and CBCWT, as partner projects to CRCA in the JRF, are contributing to the CARPE objectives of supporting capacity building for biodiversity conservation. For example, law enforcement has been improved considerably in the parks. As outlined above, AP's community development initiatives carried out through CBCWT, are impactful and relevant – we observed real progress in the field. While there are similarities between the Chinko and Garamba, the differences in terms of human presence, ecology, governance, history and management challenges outweigh the similarities. Nevertheless, the ET recognizes that despite these differences, it would have been conceptually impractical to design completely different overall frameworks for the two parks because of their shared objectives relating to law enforcement, management capacity, and stakeholder buy in.

JRF

The JRF makes theoretical sense at the design level and is a good illustration of synergies between CARPE and the PSO at the USAID mission in Kinshasa. Field partners (IC and AP) agree that there is a need to design and implement an integrated management approach. However, they find it quite difficult to adapt their workplans and activities to accommodate the need to respect the JRF IRs and sub-IRs. While they implement their own IRs which contribute to achieving the JRF, the activities do so with limited coordination, synergies, or integration at the field level. This can be summarized as support in theory but confusion in application.

The one significant exception to this problem is the overwhelming desire to participate in information sharing through the EWS (discussed above). Human well-being and wildlife conservation has been enhanced through the EWS and sharing of intelligence between communities and GNP rangers.

The security context that prevailed when the JRF ToC was developed has shifted. LRA attacks have lessened but new problems with the Mbororo are escalating and civil war in CAR is intensifying. The arrival of CAR refugees into DRC is already a strain on conservation efforts and could escalate. The Allied Democratic Forces insurgency active in North Kivu has the potential to spread to the areas where JRF projects are active. These problems were not considered at the time of JRF design and therefore highlight the need to reformulate the ToC and rethink what this would imply at the implementation level. It could certainly be argued that the ToC allows for flexibility but implementing new actions to respond to shifting security threats is something that could be difficult for IC and AP, especially in the time remaining for CRCA, CBCWT, and GCPA.

RECOMMENDATIONS

EWS and Communication Networks

IC has achieved a high level of success in making information available between villages and between villages and park rangers for the benefit of human and wildlife populations. The ET recommends pursuing and scaling up this work with the following suggestions:

- There is inadequate coordination between the IC, Caritas, Catholic Relief System, and the Congolese army HF radio systems. Coordination between these systems, sometimes operating near one another, needs to be improved. The ET accepts that efforts were made to ensure coordination at the project design phase but observations from the field highlight a lack of effective coordination. While IC has made efforts to work with other partners, the ET was unconvinced that there was concrete follow up. IC should intensify its work with the Catholic church at the local level to address this issue.
- The Mbomou-Uélé region is vast and is home to thousands of villages and hamlets. IC should scale up its rolling out of EWS and deployment of HF radios.
- As increased phone coverage reaches the Mbomou-Uélé region, the HF radio system and EWS will at some point outlive their technological relevance IC currently works with private operators to reinforce the EWS. CRCA has opened discussions with the mobile phone telecommunication companies in DRC and CAR to extend cell phone coverage to more communities, so that the integration of mobile phone use (voice, text, and data) can be further extended to more communities. Although this will take time because of the size and low human density in the area making it unattractive to telecom providers, USAID is funding improved coverage. The ET was not informed by IC about progress on this initiative. The ET recommends continuing discussions with private operators to extend coverage.
- Improved communication networks come with risks. IC should review its due diligence trainings to ensure that the radio operators they support are careful not to spread misinformation. Although IC reports that Peace Committees and HF radio operators follow due diligence training provided by CRCA, the ET was unable to confirm the impact of these trainings in the communities visited during fieldwork.
- The refugee situation needs to be closely tracked so CRCA can adapt to new threats and new needs. Changing security dynamics indicate that the CRCA Theory of Change remains relevant but needs to be updated.

Livelihoods

CRCA has made significant efforts in trying to meet expected goals. These efforts and goodwill to work in such a challenging environment need to be commended. Nevertheless, given inadequate results, IC should focus on the work they do well (communication and awareness) and re-evaluate the financial costs and operational risks of placing unrealistic expectations on their staff. Unrealistic expectations relate to management capacity, technical skills, and even personal decisions to work in the Mbomou-Uélé region.

The entire CRCA livelihoods programming should be revamped. IC has not demonstrated the capacity to contribute to sustainable livelihoods in the Mbomou-Uélé region. IC should seriously consider dropping their involvement in this sector. Alternatively, IC will need to work in far closer partnership with AP (and local associations such as OPED). Another alternative would be to identify other partners with proven livelihood experience in the region. Any rethinking of the livelihoods projects absolutely needs to be done in concert with economists specializing in rural development and preceded by careful needs assessment, market analysis, and assessment of required funding to achieve significant results.

Dealing with Trauma and Preventing Intercommunal Conflict

Years of sustained conflict in the Mbomou-Uélé region have put local populations under severe psychological stress. Traditional coping mechanisms help; they are necessary but insufficient. External, highly professional advisory can contribute to dealing with trauma. CRCA has not, however, been able to provide the level of professional support needed – in part because of the magnitude of the challenges. Given the significant suite of challenges and obstacles in meeting these objectives (IRs 4 and 5), IC should either phase these activities out or partner with organizations that have local credibility, conceptual capacity, and proven management skills. The ET was unaware of any such alternative partner, but this does not mean that there are none. CRCA could either seek out new partners or identify the expertise to provide mentoring and capacity building to bring local partners up to the requisite level.

The State

There is currently inadequate partnership with the Congolese government's agents who have the potential to contribute to meeting goals. This opinion was also heard in CAR. This situation is understandable and difficult to resolve because experience shows that the State, especially fragile states, is simultaneously problem and solution. Nevertheless, the municipalities, sectors, communes, and chiefdoms, known collectively as decentralized territorial entities, are at the interface between the population and the State so need to be involved in CRCA activities. CRCA and JRF actors should pursue avenues to be more inclusive by working harder with state representatives in the decentralized entities and relevant environment authorities. Examples of improving collaboration with state actors include making sure that territorial administrators are fully aware of and involved in activities that are implemented in their jurisdictions and reinforcing their capacity to be more responsive partners. Special attention should be given to reinforcing the capacity of provincial environmental agents. These examples serve the twofold purpose of improving local effectiveness and creating goodwill.

CRCA Management

While many of the challenges faced by CRCA stem from the inherently difficult environment of the Mbomou-Uélé region, certain limitations stem from IC's management deficit. The ET, based on discussions with key informants, concludes that the IC Kinshasa office has not demonstrated the management capacity needed to implement such an ambitious project. The ET therefore recommends that USAID have an open discussion with IC international and Kinshasa-based management to mitigate the problems as CRCA enters its final year.

Managing Integrated Programming

The integrated nature of the JRF and CRCA led to benefits, particularly related to synergies in communication efforts for reducing violence and poaching. However, it also created challenges in implementation, including related to implementing coordination between partners on the ground and ensuring adequate expertise across a variety of targeted outcome sectors. To improve on integrated programming, the ET recommends the following:

- Although perhaps more difficult to manage from an administrative perspective, the ET recommends that CRCA broaden the implementation pool of expertise to other local and international partners with proven sectoral and geographic experience in the areas where results have been less prominent. The ET recommends USAID strongly consider the breadth of expertise required in future cross-sectoral programs and whether that can be covered by a single predominant IP.
- Under the JRF or future integrated programming, USAID should institutionalize improved collaboration and communication between IPs and other stakeholders which to date are inadequate and do not appear to be considered as priorities for them.

- Under the JRF or future integrated programming, USAID should lead a process with the IPs to operationalize more efficiently and explicitly the links between IRs. This will help clarify for IPs how they can effectively collaborate and identify ways that collaboration or integration can move beyond the theoretical to the implementation level. This might include joint or integrated work-planning and common indicators which help to ensure each activity is not just independently working towards the same objectives, but rather doing so in a coordinated fashion.

USAID in the Field

The ET felt that there are weaknesses in the ways in which CRCA and JRF are being implemented that could be improved by better monitoring by USAID staff. The travel restrictions that are placed on USAID staff for field visits are severely limiting. USAID staff need to have more exposure to project implementation reality by spending time in the field. This will contribute to controlling the veracity of the rough information that trickles up from the field and forms the material for polished report presentation. No outside evaluation can replace eyes-and-ears-on-the-ground experience. If this option is not workable given administrative and security restrictions, an institutionalized third-party monitoring system should be put in place.

Social Sciences and Economics

Tradition and culture are powerful determinants in the spaces where CRCA, GCPA, and CBCWT operate. They influence how people view the past, present, and future. Respect of tradition and culture and carefully listening to how communities perceive externally driven security, development, and conservation initiatives is an essential element in successful implementation. Despite the importance of working with anthropologists, sociologists, or field-level political scientists, the ET did not meet - and was not made aware of - any high-level social scientist working in the field. This is a lost opportunity which leads the ET to recommend that social scientists be more involved in project design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. The ET acknowledges that IC works with some highly respected social scientists. Nevertheless, social science contributions were not felt during the field visit. The ET firmly believes that a deeper engagement – at the field and conceptual levels - with experienced economists, anthropologists, sociologists, and political scientists is fundamental for the remainder of CRCA and design in any related extensions or new projects. With respect to the sustainable livelihoods and community development component of CBCWT, recruitment, or at a minimum, advisory from development economists can help achieve expected results. IC has a strong humanitarian basis and recruits largely from that pool, AP recruits staff with traditional conservation backgrounds. All the community development activities, livelihood activities, and strategies to deal with trauma and conflict mitigation need to be reinforced by the institutionalized involvement of social scientists who can contribute to making sure local belief systems, world views, constraints, and expectations are more carefully integrated into programming.

Cost-benefit analysis

Although detailed cost analysis was beyond the scope of this evaluation, we frequently had the impression that costs were very high, due in large part to the challenging, remote context. Moreover, the development needs are tremendous, and CRCA is spread across a very large geography and number of villages, meaning that resources may be spread too thinly to achieve substantive development results. This mid-term evaluation of CRCA and assessment of JRF can help establish if US government funding is well spent but it seems that carrying out a rigorous cost-benefit analysis of the projects will give far greater meaning to the current report and help inform USAID's decision on whether to continue or expand such activities.

ANNEX A: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

INRM Support Team

Role	Name	Responsibilities
Evaluation Director	Mike Duthie	Provided quality assurance for key deliverables, oversight of progress against work plan, milestones, and deliverables, contract compliance.
Evaluation Manager	Anna-Karin Hess / Scott Miller	Provided day-to-day oversight of progress against work plan, milestones, and deliverables, ensuring contract compliance, serving as main HQ point of contact for the evaluation team members during fieldwork, oversaw travel mobilization and fieldwork logistics before fieldwork and monitored progress during fieldwork via communications with TL.
Evaluation Assistant	Casey Lingelbach / Aaron Ferguson	Provided administrative support including consultant contract and invoicing; provided support as requested with other tasks including contract administration, copy-editing, and other tasks as needed.
Gender and Social Inclusion (GESI) Specialist	Susan Telingator	Reviewed design, data collection instruments, and evaluation reports to ensure adequate inclusion of gender and social inclusion considerations.
Chief of Party	Robin Martino	Provided overall quality assurance and oversight; ensured evaluation and assessment integration with broader sphere of INRM activities.
Director of Operations	Stephanie Schwartzkopf / Lea Antic	Provided administrative support including travel logistics, mobilization, and consultant contracts and invoicing.

Evaluation Team

Role	Name	Responsibilities	Summary of Qualifications
Team Leader	Dr. Theodore Trefon	Lead the design and conduct of the evaluation, including development of data collection instruments, analysis, report-writing, and dissemination. Tasked ET members with assignments for contributions to fieldwork and deliverables. Served as main point of contact for USAID/DRC during fieldwork.	Theodore Trefon received his PhD in African Politics from Boston University and has been working in Central Africa for the past 27 years. He has field-based expertise in protected area management, environmental governance, and urban sociology and has conducted numerous evaluations for USAID and the European Commission. His anchor institution is the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Belgium.
Field-Based Peacebuilding Expert	Olivier Igugu	Reviewed background documents and additional documentation provided by USAID/DRC and implementing	Oliver holds a Master's degree in Biodiversity Management and Sustainable Forestry Management from the University of Kisangani.

Role	Name	Responsibilities	Summary of Qualifications
		partners as necessary while providing subject matter expertise in peacekeeping and security in the Central Africa Region. In collaboration with the research team, contributed to the CRCA midterm evaluation and JRF assessment.	With hands-on research experience in resource mining and international forestry environmental/socio-economic impacts, Oliver worked in the education sector – through Future Hope Africa – and for the Center for International Forestry Research in the environmental education sector before joining the team.
Remote Peacebuilding Expert	Maria Jessop	Reviewed final draft report through a conflict, peacebuilding and social inclusion lens and provided suggestions for strengthening analysis and recommendations.	Maria Jessop has a dozen years of experience in designing and implementing peacebuilding programs in over fifteen countries, including in CAR. She has also led and participated in assessments for USAID projects and been engaged regularly in monitoring and evaluation as a project implementer. She has an M.A. in International Peace and Conflict Resolution from American University in Washington, D.C.
Conservation Expert	Noël Kabuyaya	Provided localized expertise on conservation and wildlife poaching and trafficking in DRC; participated in fieldwork including conducting KIIs, SGIs, and FGDs.	Noël Kabuyaya obtained a Master's in Human Geography and Regional Planning from the University of Lubumbashi. Since 1989, he taught and researched at the University of Kinshasa. He was involved in numerous national and international consultancies relating to environmental governance and natural risk management in DRC, as well as environmental assessments in the context of urbanization and infrastructure development.
Logistician	Kizito Mbitita	Maintained and distributed an up-to-date fieldwork schedule daily; conducted outreach as requested to local stakeholders to set up and confirm appointments before and during fieldwork. Provided travel arrangements and support.	Nandaka Matata Kizito Mbitita holds a degree in Social Organization from the Higher Institute in Rural Development and Forms in Logistics in Transport, Supply, Administration and Security. He has 15 years of professional logistics experience, including organizing field logistics for several European Commission and USAID evaluations.

ANNEX B: DESK REVIEW BIBLIOGRAPHY

KEY PROJECT DOCUMENTS

- List of Communities and Microprojects Selected Under CRCA's IR 3
- USAID CBCWT Work Plan FY 2020
- CRCA Foundational Research Report
- CRCA Annual Report to USAID FY 2018
- CRCA Annual Report to USAID FY 2019
- CRCA Annual Report to USAID FY 2020
- CRCA Y3 Two-Pager
- CRCA Year 3 Implementation Plan
- CRCA MEL Plan
- CRCA Foundational Research Presentation
- CBCWT Work Plan FY 2020
- GCPA Year Four Work Plan
- CBCWT FY 2020 Annual Report
- CBCWT FY 2019 Annual Report
- GCPA Annual Performance Report 2018
- GCPA FY 2019 Annual Performance Report
- GCPA Semi-Annual Performance Report 2020
- Chinko GNP PMP Year 1
- CBCWT AMELP 2019
- DRC Integrated Governance Activity –Gender Analysis & Implementation Strategy (2017)
- Gender Analysis for the CARPE Phase III (2013)
- USAID/DRC Integrated Youth Development Activity Gender Analysis Report (2019)
- USAID/DRC COVID-Specific Gender Analysis USAID ACCELERE!I Distance Learning (2020)
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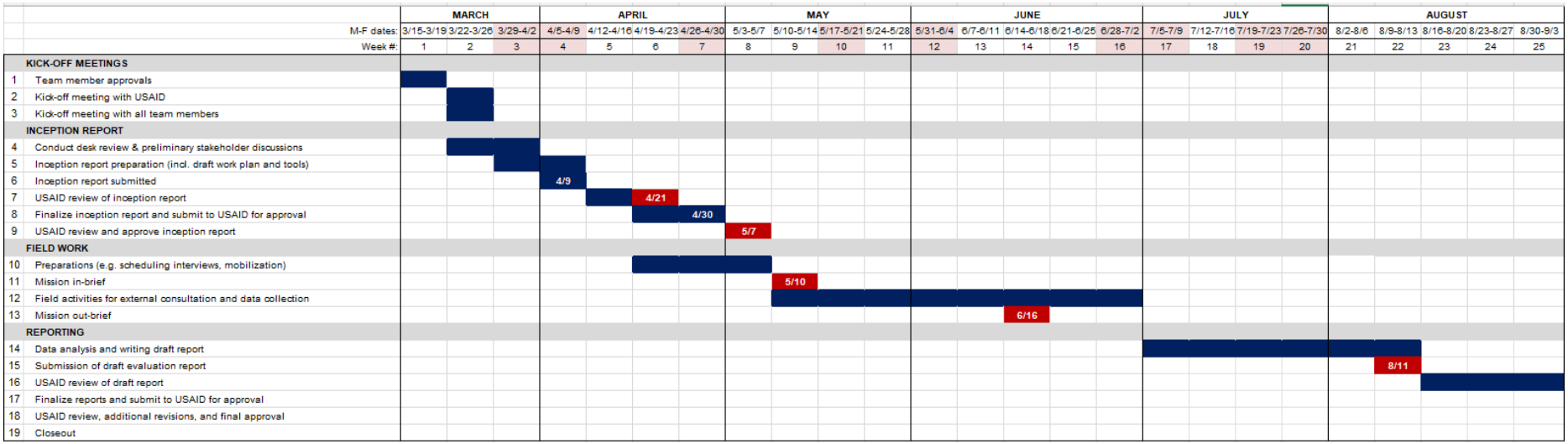
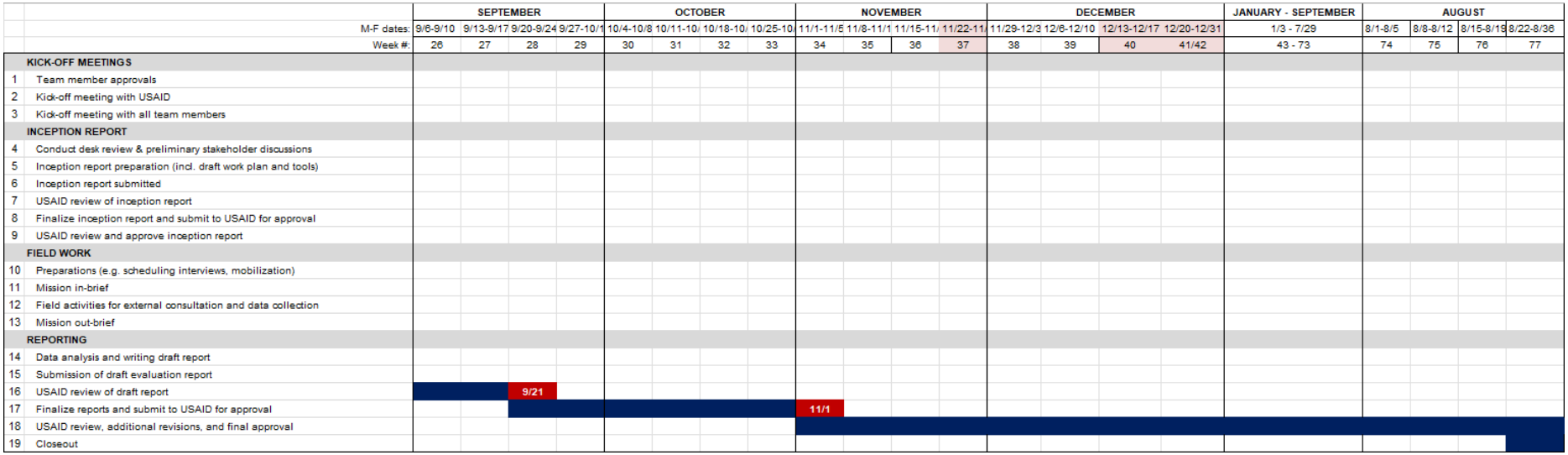
ANNEX C: GANTT CHART OF ACTIVITIES





ANNEX D: TIMELINE OF DELIVERABLES

The evaluation took place between March and September 2021. The evaluation team designed and mobilized for the evaluation during the start of the evaluation period of performance through mid-April, during which the inception report was submitted to USAID. Following this, the international team traveled to DRC and CAR to conduct fieldwork between May 13th and June 29, 2021. During fieldwork, the team spent time in Kinshasa before traveling to Ango, Dungu, and Faradje in DRC, followed by Bangui and Chinko in CAR. The ET spent approximately one week in each of Ango and Dungu visiting surrounding communities in which the project was implemented. Following data collection in DRC, the ET engaged in a brief period of preliminary analysis before undertaking an out-brief with USAID/DRC. Feedback from this out-brief was integrated into the team's Draft Report, and feedback from USAID on the draft was used to finalize the report, which is to be submitted on November 1, 2021.

Deliverable	Anticipated Submission Date
Submit Inception Report (Draft)	April 9
Submit Inception Report (Final)	April 30
In-Brief with USAID/DRC	May 10
Fieldwork in DRC	May 13 to June 18
Fieldwork in CAR	June 18 to July 3
Preliminary Out-Brief with USAID/DRC	June 16
Draft Report Submission	August 11
Final Report Submission	December 16

ANNEX E: TIMELINE OF ACTIVITIES

Below, we present the fieldwork schedule for data collection. Dates were agreed upon with USAID/DRC before the occurrence of fieldwork, however circumstances on the ground required the team to be flexible. The ET attempted to maximize the number of interviews per day, minimizing travel time on any given day by spending the entire day in one community to the greatest extent possible. The ET respected and set reasonable expectations about the schedules and working hours of various stakeholders. The ET also reserved time for follow-up interviews or spillover time for rescheduled interviews.

PROPOSED TIMELINE

Date	Location	Activity
Week 1		Dr. Trefon and Mr. Kabuyaya
May 13	Kinshasa	Arrival in Kinshasa
May 14	Kinshasa	Internal team meetings/wait for COVID test
May 15	Kinshasa	Internal team meetings/wait for COVID test
May 16	Kinshasa	Off
Week 2		Dr. Trefon and Mr. Kabuyaya (Kinshasa) | Full Team (Goma, Ango)
May 17	Kinshasa	Internal team meetings or stakeholder meetings if possible – local holiday
May 18	Kinshasa	USAID Mission Briefing, Meetings in Kinshasa
May 19	Kinshasa	Meetings in Kinshasa
May 20	Kinshasa	Meetings in Kinshasa
May 21	Kinshasa/Goma	Kinshasa to Goma (depart, 8:30, arrive 15:20) – UNHAS Pacifique arrives in Goma
May 22	Goma/Ango	Fly Goma to Ango – TBD Charter
May 23	Ango	Off
Week 3		Full Team
May 24	Ango	Communities around Ango
May 25	Ango	Communities around Ango
May 26	Ango	Communities around Ango
May 27	Ango	Communities around Ango
May 28	Ango	Communities around Ango
May 29	Ango/Dungu	Fly Ango to Dungu – TBD Charter
May 30	Dungu	Off
Week 4		Full Team
May 31	Dungu/Faradje	Dungu to Faradje
Jun 1	Faradje	Interviews in Faradje
Jun 2	Faradje	Interviews in Faradje
Jun 3	Faradje	Park Headquarters
Jun 4	Faradje/Dungu	Faradje to Dungu
Jun 5	Dungu	Communities around Dungu
Jun 6	Dungu	Off
Week 5		Full Team
Jun 7	Dungu	Communities around Dungu

Jun 8	Dungu	Communities around Dungu
Jun 9	Dungu	Communities around Dungu
Jun 10	Dungu	Communities around Dungu
Jun 11	Dungu/Bunia	Fly Dungu to Bunia (depart, 9:15, arrive 10:25) – UNHAS
Jun 12	Bunia	Internal Team Meetings
Jun 13	Bunia	Off
Week 6		Full Team (Bunia/Goma) | Dr. Trefon and Mr. Kabuyaya (Kinshasa/Bangui)
Jun 14	Bunia/Goma	Fly Bunia to Goma – UNHAS (depart, 11:10, arrive 12:15) – UNHAS
Jun 15	Goma/Kinshasa	Fly Goma to Kinshasa (depart 13:05, arrive 15:20) – UNHAS
Jun 16	Kinshasa	Meetings in Kinshasa
Jun 17	Kinshasa	Meetings in Kinshasa, Out-briefing
Jun 18	Kinshasa/Bangui	Fly Kinshasa to Bangui (depart 8:30, arrive 12:20) – UNHAS
Jun 19	Bangui	Quarantine
Jun 20	Bangui	Quarantine
Week 7		Dr. Trefon and Mr. Kabuyaya
Jun 21	Bangui	Bangui Meetings (extra quarantine day if needed)
Jun 22	Bangui/Chinko	Fly Bangui to Chinko – TBD charter
Jun 23	Chinko	Meetings in Chinko
Jun 24	Chinko	Meetings in Chinko
Jun 25	Chinko/Bangui	Fly Chinko to Bangui – TBD Charter
Jun 26	Bangui	Internal Team Meetings
Jun 27	Bangui	Off
Week 8		Dr. Trefon and Mr. Kabuyaya
Jun 28	Bangui	Bangui Meetings
Jun 29	Bangui	Bangui Meetings and Depart Bangui

IMPLEMENTED TIMELINE

Date	Location	Activity
Week 1		Dr. Trefon and Mr. Kabuyaya
May 13	Kinshasa	Arrival in Kinshasa
May 14	Kinshasa	Internal team meetings/wait for COVID test
May 15	Kinshasa	Internal team meetings/wait for COVID test
May 16	Kinshasa	Off
Week 2		Dr. Trefon and Mr. Kabuyaya (Kinshasa) | Full Team (Goma, Ango)
May 17	Kinshasa	Internal team meetings/ stakeholder meetings if possible – local holiday
May 18	Kinshasa	USAID Mission Briefing, Meetings in Kinshasa
May 19	Kinshasa/Goma	Travel from Kinshasa to Goma
May 20	Goma	Internal Teams Meeting
May 21	Goma/Bunia	Flight from Goma to Bunia, travel day/wait for COVID test
May 22	Bunia	Internal team meetings – flight standby
May 23	Bunia	Off – flight standby
Week 3		Full Team

May 24	Bunia	Internal team meeting – flight standby
May 25	Bunia	Telephone interview USAID partners and staff – flight standby
May 26	Bunia	Telephone interview USAID staff – flight standby
May 27	Bunia	Interview transcription – flight standby
May 28	Bunia	Interview transcription – flight standby
May 29	Bunia/Ango	Travel from Bunia to Ango, travel day
May 30	Ango/Banduelia	Travel from Ango to Banduelia, travel day/Bandueli Village Chief Interview
Week 4		Full Team
May 31	Bandueli	CRCA Beneficiaries Bandueli Village Interviews
Jun 1	Bandueli/Ango	Travel from Bandueli to Ango, travel day/IC staff interviews
Jun 2	Ango	Interview transcriptions
Jun 3	Ango/Dungu	Flight from Ango to Dungu, travel day/IC staff interviews
Jun 4	Dungu/Nagero	Flight from Dngu to Nagero, travel day/IC staff interviews
Jun 5	Nagero	AP staff interviews
Jun 6	Nagero/Faradje	Travel from Nagero to Faradje, travel day/interview AP staff
Week 5		Full Team
Jun 7	Faradje	CBCWT interviews
Jun 8	Faradje	Hospital interviews/interview transcription
Jun 9	Faradje	Exchanges with EU delegation/AP board members, beneficiary interviews including a former LRA child soldier
Jun 10	Fardje/Dungu	Trek from Faradje to Dungu, travel day (145 km 6.5 hours)/interview transcription
Jun 11	Dungu	Beneficiary interviews
Jun 12	Dungu/Kisangani	Travel from Dungu to Kisangani, travel day/COVID testing
Jun 13	Kisangani	Off
Week 6		Full Team (Bunia/Goma) | Dr. Trefon and Mr. Kabuyaya (Kinshasa/Bangui)
Jun 14	Kisangani/Kinshasa	Travel from Kisangani to Kinshasa, travel day
Jun 15	Kinshasa	Off
Jun 16	Kinshasa	Meeting USAID
Jun 17	Kinshasa	Meeting USAID/COVID testing
Jun 18	Kinshasa	Flight delay
Jun 19	Kinshasa	Flight standby
Jun 20	Kinshasa	Flight standby/COVID testing
Week 7		Dr. Trefon and Mr. Kabuyaya
Jun 21	Kinshasa	Flight delay
Jun 22	Kinshasa/Bangui	Flight from Kinshasa to Bangui, travel day
Jun 23	Bangui/Chinko	Flight from Bangui to Chinko, travel day
Jun 24	Chinko/Bangassou	Beneficiary interviews in Chinko/travel day, Travel from Chinko to Bangassou
Jun 25	Bangassou	Beneficiary interviews
Jun 26	Bangassou	Flight cancelation
Jun 27	Bangassou/Bangui	Flight from Bangassou to Bangui, travel day
Week 8		Dr. Trefon and Mr. Kabuyaya
Jun 28	Bangui	Bangui Meetings
Jun 29	Bangui	Death of Noel Kabuyaya
Jun 30	Bangui	Logistics related to Noël Kabuyaya's passing
Jul 1	Bangui	Logistics related to Noël Kabuyaya's passing/USAID meeting

Jul 2	Bangui	Logistics related to Noël Kabuyaya's passing
Jul 3	Bangui/Paris	Travel from Bangui to Paris, travel day
Jul 4	Paris/Brussels	Travel day from Paris to Brussels

ANNEX F: DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

The draft tools below provide illustrative consent scripts and questions that were posed to key stakeholders. The first tool was used for USAID Staff and government representative interviews. The second tool was used for IP interviews. The third tool was used for the village chief and prominent figure interviews and discussions. The fourth tool was used for project beneficiary and other community member interviews and discussions.

The following information will be recorded for all interview notes, and informed consent shall be obtained using the consent script below.

Questionnaire

Number of Respondents	
Respondent Name(s)	
Respondent Role(s)	
Respondent Sex/Gender	
Location	
Date	
Interview Start Time	
Interview End Time	
Lead Interviewer Name	
Lead Notetaker Name	
Additional Field Team members present	

INFORMED CONSENT SCRIPT:

Introductions: *Thank you for joining us today. First, let me introduce the team. [INTRODUCTIONS]*

Purpose of the Interview: *We work for Social Impact, a US-based research firm, and are working with USAID to evaluate the Community Resilience in Central Africa Activity and Joint Results Framework, including the Garamba Chinko Protected Areas Activity and Community-Based Counter Wildlife Trafficking Activity. We are here now to discuss with you the effects the CRCA Activity and JRF have had on various beneficiary groups. Our objectives are to understand the effects of the CRCA Activity and JRF on beneficiaries and gather lessons learned that can be used in designing similar projects in the future.*

You are one of about 70 people who have been selected to participate in these one-on-one or group interviews because of your knowledge and experience with the CRCA project. Though these interviews we are talking to CRCA project staff, implementing partners, USAID staff, Government of DRC representatives, and village beneficiaries.

In our interview today, we will discuss the nature of your interaction with CRCA and the JRF, any changes you've seen as a result of the activities (both good and bad), and your ideas about how the activities may be improved in the future.

Time: *This interview will take between 1 and 1.5 hours.*

Voluntary Participation: *Your participation in this discussion is voluntary. If there are any questions you don't feel comfortable answering, you do not have to do so, and you are welcome to excuse yourself at any time during our conversation without any consequences.*

Risks and Benefits: *We do not foresee any significant risks or direct benefits from your participation in this study. Neither this research nor your answers to our questions will in any way determine if a project will be implemented here in the future or affect your ability to access or receive any services, now or in the future. While any close contact with others poses a risk of COVID-19 infection, we have taken the following precautionary steps to reduce the risk for COVID-19 transmission to a minimal level: we will wear face masks throughout the interview, remain six feet (about 1.5 meters) apart, provide face masks for all participants if needed, we have hand sanitizer available, and are conducting the interviews in an outdoor space. All field team members must wear masks for the duration of the interview. The field team strongly encourages that all interview respondents wear masks.*

Confidentiality: *Everything you tell us will be kept confidential by the evaluation team to the fullest extent permitted by the law in DRC, CAR, the United States, and the policies of USAID. Only the INRM evaluation team will have access to your name in combination with the information you share. We will combine the information you share with others and deliver it in a report to USAID. This report will also be made publicly available, but nothing you share with us will have your name attributed to it in our report. Additionally, potentially identifying information you share with us will not be shared to your peers or colleagues.*

> ***For Group Interviews:*** *Due to the private nature of this research, we ask that all participants agree not to share anything that is discussed with anyone outside of this group once this conversation ends. Nonetheless, there is a risk that other discussion participants will repeat what is shared here today. Remember that you are free to refuse to answer any question.*

Recording: *With your permission, we would like to audio record our conversation and take notes. The recordings and the notes will not be shared with anyone outside the evaluation team – we are conducting many interviews, so this is mainly to help us make sure we do not misunderstand anything you tell us or misrepresent anything in our notes. If you choose to opt out of an audio recorded interview, we will proceed with the interview and will not turn on the audio recording device, but we will still take notes.*

Informed Consent Question:

- *Do you have any questions for us before we begin? [Yes / No]*
- *Are you willing to participate in this interview? [Yes / No]*
- *Is it okay if we record our conversation? [Okay to record / Not okay to record]*

If you have any questions or concerns, you may contact the Social Impact Team Leader, Mr. Theodore Trefon, at theodore.trefon@africamuseum.be, or the Social Impact Institutional Review Board at irb@socialimpact.com.

Our team will try to make findings available as feasible to all participants. If you are interested in receiving a copy of the final report, you may email the Social Impact Evaluation Manager, Anna-Karin Hess, at ahess@socialimpact.com any time after September 30, 2021. You will also be able to find this report online by looking on the USAID Development Experience Clearinghouse website after October 31, 2021.

DRAFT TOOL: INTERVIEWS WITH USAID STAFF AND GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES

#	Question	Probes
1.	**We are going to begin this interview by discussing the CRCA activity.** **Please describe your role regarding the CRCA in the Mbomou-Uélé border region.**	This first set of question will focus on CRCA; questions relating to JRF will follow below. When did you begin working on the CRCA Activity?

#	Question	Probes
2.	**Can you please describe the CRCA project in your own words?**	
3.	**Since the start of the CRCA project in October 2017, can you describe any positive changes you have noted for the five initially set objectives?**	As a reminder these five objectives are: 1. Prevent and adapt to threats of violent conflict. 2. Participate in regional efforts to protect wildlife from armed group exploitation. 3. Develop safe and sustainable livelihood opportunities. 4. Recognize and recover from violence-induced trauma. 5. Peacefully transform intercommunal conflicts.
4.	**What are the factors that have facilitated positive change?**	What do you think enabled these achievements? What were the main drivers of the success?
5.	**Have there been challenges to achieving any of these objectives?**	
6.	**What are the obstacles that have caused these setbacks?**	Can you identify reason for these setbacks? What were the consequences? How were those setbacks ultimately addressed?
7.	**How have different groups or stakeholders benefitted from CRCA?**	Ask for examples to support response. What factors facilitated or prevented effective targeting of benefits? What could be done to improve going forward? Have there been any unintended impacts to these stakeholder groups (especially women, youth, and marginalized groups)?
8.	**Do you think CRCA implementers effectively worked with stakeholders to strengthen community resilience in the face of human and wildlife security threats?**	Why or why not?
9.	**To what extent are the different needs of men and women and marginalized groups addressed in CRCA?**	Did addressing gender and marginalization improve outcomes? If so, in what ways? To what extent did women and marginalized groups (e.g., people with disabilities, pastoralists, Indigenous Peoples, ethnic minorities) participate in substantive roles? What are the barriers to their participation? What factors enhanced participation for women and marginalized groups? Have there been any unintended consequences of their participation? Probe for other categories of social inclusion (age, disability status, LGBTI- identification, and race/ethnicity).
10.	**Given all we have discussed, do you think that the assumptions underlying the project theory of change were valid?**	What is different than initially expected, and how has it affected the project?

#	Question	Probes
	Why or why not?	
11.	**Do you think the project will be sustainable?** **Why or why not?**	What factors do you believe will facilitate or prevent sustainability?
12.	**Overall, which project activities do you feel have the greatest likelihood of being scaled up or out (future sustainability)?**	Ask for examples to support response. What are the factors you think will facilitate or prevent sustainability? Probe to ask about differences between project activities.
13.	**What are the main information gaps you are hoping for this evaluation to fill?**	
14.	**We will now shift our attention from CRCA to the JRF.** **Can you please describe how the JRF has worked in practice?**	Specifically, in what ways has it deviated from USAID or the implementers intended approaches?
15.	**In what ways has coordination and collaboration been successful?**	Give examples from (i) the conservation and peace and security programming, (ii) CRCA, (iii) Garamba-Chinko and (iv) CBCWT.
16.	**Have there been challenges in coordination or collaboration related to implementing the JRF?**	If yes, please explain. Give examples from (i) the conservation and peace and security programming, (ii) CRCA, (iii) Garamba-Chinko and (iv) CBCWT.
17.	**Are there any important lessons learned from implementing a JRF like this?**	Are there particular context, program, partner, or resource factors that contribute to or inhibit its success?
18.	**Is there anything else you'd like to discuss regarding CRCA and the JRF?**	
19.	**Thank you for your participation in this interview. Your responses will be kept confidential and will be used solely for the purposes of this evaluation.**	

DRAFT TOOL: INTERVIEWS WITH IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

Interviews with AP or AWF respondents will be tailored to focus on the JRF with limited questions about the CRCA Activity.

#	Question	Probes
1.	**Can you, first, describe your role in the CRCA in the Mbomou-Uélé border region?**	This first set of question will focus on CRCA; questions relating to JRF will follow below. When did you start working on the CRCA Activity?

#	Question	Probes
2.	**Can you please describe the CRCA project in your own words?**	
3.	**Since the start of the CRCA project in October 2017, what are the project's key achievements for each of the five objectives initially set?**	As a reminder these five objectives are: 1. Prevent and adapt to threats of violent conflict 2. Participate in regional efforts to protect wildlife from armed group exploitation 3. Develop safe and sustainable livelihood opportunities 4. Recognize and recover from violence-induced trauma 5. Peacefully transform intercommunal conflicts
4.	**What are some of the main challenges faced by CRCA to date?**	What do you think is the reason for these challenges? What were the consequences? How were those challenges ultimately addressed?
5.	**In what ways has the project most and least effectively supported building the resilience of communities?**	Ask for examples to support response. Are these efforts well-aligned with efforts by other government or non-government stakeholders? Probe specifically about threats to people and wildlife.
6.	**How effective is civil society in contributing to community resilience? Has the project contributed to strengthening civil society organizations?**	
7.	**Regarding the partnerships established by CRCA to stimulate the resilience of communities in the Mbomou-Uélé border region to threats to human and wildlife security: how effective have efforts been to date, relative to their objectives?**	How do these partnerships specifically address constraints to the resilience of communities? Are these efforts well-aligned with efforts by other government or non-government stakeholders?
8.	**Which groups or stakeholders have benefited the most and the least from the projects, relative to their objectives?**	Ask for examples to support response. Probe for each stakeholder group from footnoted list in USAID questions. What factors facilitated or prevented effective targeting of benefits? What could be done to improve going forward?
9.	**To what extent are the different needs of men and women and marginalized groups addressed in this activity?**	Did addressing gender and marginalization improve outcomes? If so, in what ways? To what extent did women and marginalized groups (e.g., people with disabilities, pastoralists, Indigenous Peoples, ethnic minorities) participate in substantive roles? What are the barriers to their participation? What factors enhanced participation for women and marginalized groups? Have there been any unintended consequences of their participation? Probe for other categories of social inclusion (age, disability status, LGBTI-identification, and race/ethnicity).

#	Question	Probes
10.	**How, if at all, does the Activity consider gender equality, women's empowerment, and social inclusion more broadly into the design and implementation of their activities?**	Ask for examples to support response.
11.	**Overall, which project activities do you feel have the greatest likelihood of being scaled up or out (future sustainability)?**	Ask for examples to support response. What are the factors you think will facilitate or prevent sustainability? Probe to ask about differences between project activities.
12.	**In your view, what is the value-add of USAID's support relative to other donor partners, in terms of supporting the resilience of communities in the Mbomou-Uélé border region to threats to human and wildlife security?**	Ask for examples to support response.
13.	**Please describe how CRCA has contributed to JRF and collaboration with other stakeholders.**	
14.	**We will now shift our attention from CRCA to the JRF.** **Can you please describe how the JRF has worked in practice?**	In what ways has it deviated from USAID or the implementers intended approaches?
15.	**Are there additional stakeholders with whom USAID CARPE-PSO should engage in order to support effective implementation of the resilience of communities in the Mbomou-Uélé border region to threats to human and wildlife security?**	
16.	**Do you think the assumptions underlying JRF's theory of change are still valid?**	Why or why not? What is different than initially expected, and how has it affected the projects?
17.	**How can collaborative efforts under JRF be improved?**	
18.	**Are there any important lessons learned from implementing a JRF like this?**	Are there particular context, program, partner, or resource factors that contribute to or inhibit its success?
19.	**Is there anything else you would like to discuss regarding on the JRF?**	
20.	**Thank you for your participation in this interview. Your responses will be kept confidential and will be used solely for the purposes of this evaluation.**	

DRAFT TOOL: INTERVIEWS WITH VILLAGE CHIEFS AND PROMINENT FIGURES

#	Question	Probes
1.	**First, we would like to start by asking you to describe the CRCA Activity in your own words.**	
2.	**What activities have been implemented in this community as part of the CRCA Activity?**	
3.	**In general, how is your community impacted by the activities implemented by CRCA in this area to date?**	Please provide examples. Probe for positive and negative impacts (social/cultural, environmental, and economic). Probe for specific ways that women, youth, and other marginalized groups have (or could) be impacted those activities.
4.	**Is CRCA well-aligned with the priorities and needs of this community?** **Why or why not?**	Ask for examples to support response.
5.	**What are some of the main achievements of the project to date?**	Do achievements benefit community members equally?
6.	**What are some of the main problems the project faces?**	What do you think is the reason for these challenges? What were the consequences?
7.	**Do you think that CRCA activities have contributed to improved wildlife management?**	What improvements would you like to see made?
8.	**Do you think that CRCA has contributed to improving community livelihoods?**	Has there been wealth creation actions? Are there visible indicators of improved livelihoods?
9.	**Do you and your family feel more or less threatened by violence since the start of CRCA?**	What improvements would you like to see made?
10.	**Has CRCA helped people in your community recognize violence-induced trauma?**	*Ensure the respondent understands the concept of "violence-induced trauma."* If yes, please explain. Has CRCA helped people in your community recover from violence-induced trauma? If yes, please explain.
11.	**Do you believe that a project like CRCA can help prevent violent conflict?**	Why or why not?
12.	**To what extent are the different needs of men and women and marginalized groups addressed in this activity?**	Did addressing gender and marginalization improve outcomes? If so, in what ways? To what extent did women and marginalized groups (e.g., people with disabilities, pastoralists, Indigenous Peoples, ethnic minorities) participate in substantive roles? What are the barriers to their participation?

#	Question	Probes
		What factors enhanced participation for women and marginalized groups? Have there been any unintended consequences of their participation? Probe for other categories of social inclusion (age, disability status, LGBTI- identification, and race/ethnicity).
13.	**Please describe your working relationship with the Activity?** **Is your working relationship with the Activity effective? Why or why not?**	If not successful, what were the challenges, and how might they be addressed going forward? Probe about the working relationship of the project with other community members. How does this compare to your working relationship with other environmental protection stakeholders?
14.	**In this area, how do you think that all people, men and women, youths, and other disadvantaged groups, should be considered in environmental protection?** **To what extent has the projects provided support toward these objectives?** **Do you feel this work has been effective?** **Why or why not?**	Ask for examples to support response.
15.	**Is there duplication of effort or any challenges in coordination by different organizations working in environmental protection in your community?**	Ask for examples to support response. What are the consequences of any such occurrences? How might this be improved going forward?
16.	**When the CRCA projects comes to an end, will you sustain the efforts or activities that the project supported?**	How? Why or why not? What do you think will determine their ability to continue?
17.	**How should CRCA be improved going forward, what would you recommend and why?**	
18.	**USAID supports other programming in nearby protected areas, including Garamba National Park and Chinko Reserve. Are you familiar with other USAID projects in these areas?**	If yes, please explain how you learned about these activities.
19.	**Is there anything else you would like to discuss regarding the CRCA Activity and items we have talked about?**	
20.	**Thank you for your participation in this interview. Your responses will be kept confidential and will be used solely for the purposes of this evaluation.**	

DRAFT TOOL: INTERVIEWS WITH PROJECT BENEFICIARIES AND OTHER COMMUNITY MEMBERS

#	Question	Probes
1.	**First, we would like to start by asking you to describe the CRCA activity. Can you please describe the CRCA activity?**	What programs have been implemented in your community as part of CRCA? How well informed about them are you? Have you been involved in discussions about actions to take or how to get involved?
2.	**What are your personal experiences with the initiatives so far? How are they affecting your community?**	Probe about the extent people feel they are more secure and able to cope with threats to wildlife. Probe for specific ways that women, youth, and other marginalized groups have (or could) be impacted by those activities, especially in terms of greater agency or capacity in the environmental sector.
3.	**What do you like about CRCA?** **Is there anything you dislike about it?**	Probe for potential positive and negative impacts (social/cultural, environmental, and economic). Ask for examples for various CRCA components.
4.	**Do you think that CRCA activities have contributed to improved wildlife management?**	Please explain.
5.	**Do you think that CRCA has contributed to improving community quality of life?**	Have there been wealth creation actions? Are there visible indicators of improved livelihoods?
6.	**Do you and your family feel more or less threatened by violence since CRCA began?**	State CRCA start year if helpful. Please explain.
7.	**Has CRCA helped people in your community recognize violence-induced trauma?**	*Ensure the respondent understands the concept of "violence-induced trauma."* Please explain. Has CRCA helped people in your community recover from violence-induced trauma? Please explain.
8.	**Do you believe that a project like CRCA can help prevent violent conflict?**	Why or why not?
9.	**To what extent are the different needs of men and women and marginalized groups addressed in this activity?**	Did addressing gender and marginalization improve outcomes? If so, in what ways? To what extent did women and marginalized groups (e.g., people with disabilities, pastoralists, Indigenous Peoples, ethnic minorities) participate in substantive roles? What are the barriers to their participation? What factors enhanced participation for women and marginalized groups? Have there been any unintended consequences of their participation?

		Probe for other categories of social inclusion (age, disability status, LGBTI- identification, and race/ethnicity).
10.	**When the CRCA comes to an end, will you sustain the efforts or activities that the projects supported?** **Why or why not?** **What do you think will determine the sustainability of the projects?**	How? Why or why not? What do you think will determine their ability to continue?
11.	**Is there anything else you would like to discuss regarding CRCA activities in your village?**	

ANNEX G: EVALUATION STATEMENT OF WORK

BACKGROUND

The Mbomou Uélé Border Region, which spans the CAR and the DRC, has endured decades of marginalization and cyclical conflict. Armed groups including the Lord's Resistance Army and poachers seeking ivory, gold, and diamonds, exploit the region's lack of governance and porous borders by attacking civilians. Conflict stemming from intercommunal violence between civilians, sometimes sparked by conflict over access to land, is compounded by deeply rooted trauma and mistrust. Local communities, humanitarian actors, and wildlife conservation actors in the region have developed tools and strategies to help prevent and recover from violent conflict and exploitation. By connecting, enhancing, and expanding these efforts, the **CRCA** activity is helping to build a future in which the people and wildlife of the Mbomou Uélé region are linked less by the mutual threats they face and more by their shared potential to thrive.

CRCA is a five-year, USAID-funded project that aims to strengthen the resilience of communities in the Mbomou Uélé Border Region in the face of threats to the security of both humans and wildlife. Launched in October 2017, CRCA is equipping target communities with training, tools, and information to:

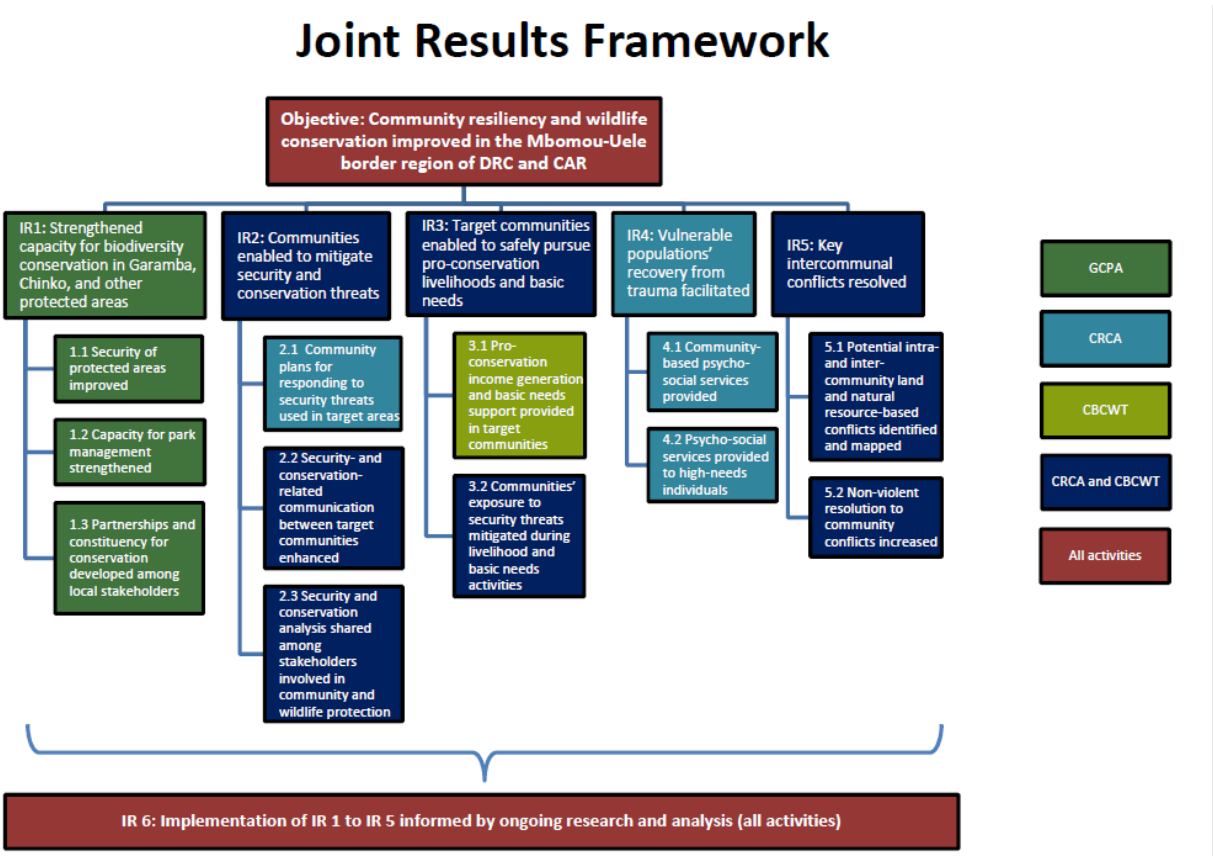
- Prevent and adapt to threats of violent conflict
- Participate in regional efforts to protect wildlife from armed group exploitation
- Develop safe and sustainable livelihood opportunities
- Recognize and recover from violence-induced trauma
- Peacefully transform intercommunal conflicts

The CRCA activity is also improving regional conflict analysis and cross-border information sharing to inform civilian protection efforts and increase coordination among security actors, Peace Committees, humanitarians, and conservation actors.

CRCA is one of three activities that currently operate under a **JRF** through USAID/DRC's CARPE and PSO. These three activities also form the USAID/DRC Regional Conflict and Environment collaboration cluster:

- CRCA – led by Invisible Children
- GCPA – led by AP
- CBCWT – led by AP

The conceptual framework that underpins CARPE-PSO JRF (Figure 1 below) presents three interrelated elements: security, conservation, and development. These three elements contribute to building stability and resilience and are woven into all three projects. Part of the implementation of the framework is to explore the relationship across these three elements and determine the extent to which community resilience and wildlife conservation can be simultaneously improved. The JRF for the CRCA, GCPA, and CBCWT projects includes one overarching objective and six IRs. Certain results are project-specific while others are joint, with the implementation involving at least two of the three projects. The framework serves as a basis for (1) collaborating and coordinating across activities, (2) building a shared monitoring system, and (3) exploring learning questions.



The CRCA Joint Results Framework. Source: USAID CARPE-PSO Coordination Meeting Notes, November 2019.

PURPOSE

The objectives of this assignment are to (1) conduct a performance evaluation of USAID's CRCA Activity and (2) conduct an assessment of the JRF for CRCA, GCPA, and CBCWT. Both activities are expected to generate conclusions and recommendations to inform management of CRCA, development of new activities, and the potential benefits of the JRF approach.

More specifically, the evaluation will determine the relevance, efficacy, potential impact, and sustainability of the results achieved by CRCA. The evaluators must undertake an assessment of the project to gauge progress made in the implementation of planned activities toward reaching stated goals and objectives. The evaluation will also assess the wider project context to validate project assumptions, progress based on monitoring data, and assess the appropriateness of results indicators to measure impacts, based on actual implementation experience to date, and the ways in which the broader context and activities might be influencing one another. The contractor must develop recommendations for adjustments of assumptions and results indicators, as warranted, to enhance project implementation along elements of the theory of change.

AUDIENCE AND INTENDED USERS

The primary stakeholders to benefit from the findings of the CRCA performance evaluation and JRF assessment include:

- The USAID CRCA team, including Invisible Children and its partners, for adaptive management for the remaining period of performance, and for future programming;

- The USAID team engaged in CARPE-PSO joint results framework, including Invisible Children, AP, and their partners, to inform adaptation of the framework and development of future joint results frameworks and learning agendas;
- Wider USAID/DRC Mission colleagues to inform cross-sectoral programming and programming around protected areas as anchor institutions in DRC;
- Communities in the region, to foster transparency and accountability; and

  USAID's external bilateral, regional, and international partners and key stakeholders addressing peace and security and conservation issues across the Central Africa region to share lessons learned, including participating host country government agencies and other international partners.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The **CRCA midterm performance evaluation** seeks to answer five primary evaluation questions and related sub-questions:

1) To what extent is CRCA on the path to meeting its overall intended goals and each of its objectives in line with the theory of change?
    a. What are the notable areas of progress the activity has achieved in support of its objectives and goals? Response should include consideration of early warning systems, trauma-related programming, the extent to which the latter conforms with international best practices and is achieving results, livelihoods, social cohesion, and community support for conservation.
    b. What are some of the challenges faced in meeting the intended goals, objectives, and results? These should include technical, project management, personnel, logistical political and other issues as relevant. How effectively has Invisible Children dealt with those challenges? What can be changed to better meet goals and objectives?
2) To what extent are the different needs of men and women and marginalized groups addressed in this activity?
    a. Did addressing gender and marginalization improve outcomes? If so, in what ways?
    b. To what extent did women and marginalized groups (e.g., people with disabilities, pastoralists, Indigenous Peoples, ethnic minorities) participate in substantive roles? What (if any) are the barriers and constraints to their participation? What (if any) factors specifically enhanced participation for women and marginalized groups? Have there been any (positive or negative) unintended consequences of their participation?
3) In what ways has coordination and collaboration (both conservation and peace and security programming, and among the three activities that are part of the JRF) been successful and/or faced challenges?
    a. How has CRCA coordinated and collaborated with other activities that are part of the JRF?
    b. Has the coordination and collaboration contributed to improved outcomes?
4) Are there any urgent gaps, within or beyond project scope, that need to be addressed to effectively meet the project's goals? If so, what are recommendations for how these needs can be addressed?

The **JRF assessment** seeks to answer the following questions:

1) What have been the key challenges and successes in implementing the JRF to date?
    a. How has the JRF facilitated integrated programming?
    b. What has/not worked well regarding coordination and collaboration between the three activities and their implementing partners, as well as between conservation and

peacebuilding programs? For which sub-IRs has collaboration been most effective and why?

c. What has/not worked well regarding the "anchor" model (i.e., utilizing protected area programming for community development benefits)? What lessons learned are there for replicating this model with other parks?

2) What indicators or other measures within the JRF have been most effective to communicate and demonstrate evidence of integrated programming benefits to different sectoral stakeholders?
    a. What additional indicators might be missing from the JRF, if any?
3) What benefits (if any) have there been as a result of integration, both within activities (of conservation and peace and security programming) and between the three activities, in relation to conservation and peace and security? This will include the below question and others as appropriate:

    a. Did the EWS information sharing mechanisms contribute to the efforts of the biodiversity conservation partners in the region to combat illegal wildlife killings and traffic?

    b. In what ways have the protected areas contributed to the success or otherwise of CRCA?

METHODOLOGY

This scope of work does not define a full methodology for the evaluation and assessment within this document, but rather outlines several required components of a methodology that the Contractor should build upon in the evaluation design. To maximize efficiency, we envision one Evaluation Team conducting both activities. This reduces costs, saves time for USAID (and other stakeholder) respondents, and ensures knowledge gained from both components of the activity are fully leveraged. The Evaluation Team will use primarily qualitative approaches and a combination of secondary (existing) and primary (new) data during the evaluation and assessment. Gender and social inclusion will be addressed throughout the methodology. The team will seek participation from both men and women, as well as those from marginalized groups, to ensure all beneficiaries are represented in stakeholder engagement activities as well as data collection. Special consideration will be taken to address cultural conditions and political dynamics that will ensure participants are safeguarded during the engagement and collection process. Additionally, as addressed below, gender and social inclusion will be the topic of some evaluation questions.

The evaluation methodology will include at a minimum the following:

Desk Review. At the initial stages of the evaluation, the Evaluation Team conducted a desk review of all relevant USAID CRCA reports and findings to date, as well as relevant documents for JRF from each of the three activities. For the CRCA performance evaluation, this includes the original contract, annual work plans and reports, progress reports, MEL plans and data, as well as key technical deliverables including the foundational research conducted in 2017. For the joint results framework, this included documentation on progress towards activity-level indicators, activity-level learning and joint learning plans, and notes from coordination meetings. In addition, the contractor must review other relevant literature/documents from non-USAID interventions and research. Through this exercise – as well as discussions with USAID staff – evaluation questions will be further refined, and the Evaluation Team will be in a strong position to develop the evaluation design and instruments.

Stakeholder Engagement. The Evaluation Team held separate (virtual) kick-off meetings with relevant USAID and implementing partner stakeholders for the CRCA performance evaluation and JRF assessment. In addition, targeted discussions were had with USAID staff to further inform the evaluation

design and instrument development. This preliminary engagement helped the Evaluation Team identify the full set of relevant stakeholder groups that should be interviewed as part of the primary data collection activities, in order to sufficiently collect data/information to effectively answer each of the final evaluation questions as agreed by the Mission. The Evaluation Team continued to engagement with key stakeholders throughout the evaluation, including regular check-ins and both an in-brief and out-brief at the start and end of field work.

Data Collection

Key Informant Interviews/Focus Group Discussions. Based on the above activities, the Evaluation Team identified individuals who were classified as "Key Stakeholders" – individuals/institutional representatives that will be most impacted by USAID's continued engagement with peace and security, development, and conservation in the Central Africa Region. For the CRCA evaluation, this included USAID staff, implementing partners, government/ministry representatives, and activity beneficiaries at project sites. The team conducted in-depth key informant interviews with USAID staff, implementing partners, and government/ministry representatives, and focus groups with activity beneficiaries to gather more detailed information associated with the evaluation questions. For the JRF assessment, the Evaluation Team included questions specific to the assessment questions in interviews with USAID staff and implementing partners for the CRCA Activity, as well as conduct additional interviews with USAID staff and implementing partners for the GCPA and CBCWT activities.

Gender and Social Inclusion. A best practice in evaluation design and implementation is to properly analyze the context and explore and adequately capture the different situations and experiences of women and men and boys and girls, as well as those of marginalized groups including pastoralists and Indigenous Peoples. The evaluation questions above include one question specifically about participation of women in CRCA's peacebuilding process. In addition, the Evaluation Team applied a gender and social inclusion lens to ascertain the following:

1) The extent to which gender equality was achieved regarding the program's opportunities (i.e., beneficiaries' participation), results, and female empowerment, as defined in USAID's Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy;
2) The extent to which any other categories of social inclusion (age, disability status, LGBTI-identification, Indigenous Peoples, and race/ethnicity) were important in shaping the program's results.

To understand the gender differences and gender-specific effects the Evaluation Team analyzed findings disaggregated by sex and marginal groups. Additional information can be found in USAID's *How-To-Note: Engendering Evaluation at USAID* (December 2016).

DELIVERABLES AND WORK PLAN

The contractor's Evaluation Team must produce the following work and materials:

Inception Report (including detailed work plan). The Evaluation Team submitted a detailed Inception Report that illustrated what kinds of evidence the team would use to answer each evaluation question and clearly defined methods and tools for collecting this evidence. There was a single Inception Report meant to cover both the CRCA performance evaluation and the JRF assessment. The work plan provided a timeline for the different stages of the evaluation work and delineate responsibilities among the Evaluation Team members. The Contractor identified local holidays, religious events, or other factors that may affect the evaluation's work schedule (e.g., rainy season) and incorporated the findings into the work plan.

In-Brief with USAID. The contractor provided relevant staff at USAID with an introductory oral briefing within three business days of arrival in the country. At this meeting, the contractor reviewed final design and implementation plans, as well as final data collection instruments.

Field Data Collection. A single data collection trip was made by the Evaluation Team for both the CRCA performance evaluation and the JRF assessment. The contractor assumed approximately four to five weeks for data collection, including one week in Kinshasa, DRC, for interviews with USAID staff and implementing partners, three weeks for travel to CRCA activity sites for interviews with implementing partner staff at field offices and focus group discussions with beneficiaries, and allowed for sufficient travel time between locations.

The Evaluation Team consisted of four core team members – three senior experts that between them had expertise in evaluation methods, conservation, and security/violence prevention and one translator/logistician to provide support throughout. Efforts were made to find experts fluent in French and local languages. At least one of the experts was fluent in French, and additional translators provided additional support in local languages, as necessary. The Evaluation Team visited 10 – 12 activity sites accessible from Dungo, Ango and potentially Gwane (if feasible), and allowed for two days of travel between each base and to/from Kinshasa.

Throughout data collection, the Evaluation Team followed a "Do No Harm" approach, ensuring that activities dod not put those at greater risk than they would otherwise face. All team members followed local COVID-19 policies and procedures regarding travel restrictions, limitations on gatherings, etc. as well as accepted best practices for maintaining health and hygiene (such as wearing masks, carrying hand sanitizer, etc.) as relevant. As part of fieldwork preparation, the team developed a COVID-19 mitigation protocol. Furthermore, conflict-sensitivity aspects were incorporated into data collection. For instance, identity markers and team composition and balance will be considered as relevant to the local context. All CRCA performance evaluation and JRF assessment participants were read an informed consent script, which included any COVID-19 related risks as well as general principles of confidentiality, risks/benefits, details on how their data was to be used, and informing them of their rights as research participants.

Out-brief with USAID. The contractor must present a summary evaluation purpose and methodology, as well as preliminary findings to all interested staff at USAID and then incorporate comments received during the briefing into the evaluation report. The out-brief purposes are for the contractor to obtain additional inputs/insight on the contexts and data interpretation and to solicit ideas for actionable recommendations. As with the in-brief(s), two out-briefs may be conducted if the key USAID staff for the CRCA performance evaluation and JRF assessment are different. Ideally, the Evaluation Team will have three to four days in-country between fieldwork and the out-brief to allow for ample time for preliminary analysis and compilation of findings.

EVALUATION TEAM

The contractor deployed an effective personnel structure to conduct the work outlined in this scope of work. It is our intention that the core Evaluation Team will be a mix of expatriates and Congolese professionals. Efforts were made to find experts fluent in French.

Significant effort was made to include gender balance in the evaluation team members, some of the team members had proven experience in gender and social inclusion. All deliverables were also reviewed by INRM's GESI Lead. Further efforts were made to ensure balance in the evaluation team members along ethnic and cultural identities as appropriate given the context.

In addition to the core Evaluation Team, at each base (e.g., Dungu and Ango) a locally based translator was hired to facilitate communication in local languages, scheduling and logistics. This is in addition to

the main translator/logistician who will travel with the team throughout the entirety of data collection, and assist with research tasks such as note taking, and other responsibilities, as necessary. All team members, including logisticians and translators, were independent from implementing partners.

The INRM MEL/Collaborating Learning and Adapting Lead served as the Evaluation Director and point of contact with USAID to provide quality assurance and technical oversight throughout all stages of the evaluation and assessment. The INRM GESI Lead served as the GESI Advisor, contributing at key points to ensure adequate consideration of gender and social inclusion throughout the evaluation. The Mission Coordination, Innovation, and Learning Lead helped oversee the design and implementation of the evaluation and assessment and communication of results to highlight lessons learned from integrated approaches and identified and recommended opportunities to apply and learn from promising innovative approaches. The Director of Administration and Operations helped support contracting and logistics.

In addition, the contractor provided support from an Evaluation Manager and Evaluation Assistant. The Evaluation Manager provided day-to-day oversight of progress against work plan, milestones, and deliverables, ensuring contract compliance, monitor progress during data collection, and played a critical role in managing quality assurance using the contractor's established tools and processes. The Evaluation Assistant provided administrative support as needed (e.g., during recruitment and copy-editing). Both the Evaluation Manager and Evaluation Assistant had evaluation experience and assisted in the design, data management and analysis as needed. The contractor provided CVs for the proposed Evaluation Team as well as the roles and responsibilities for all team members.

COMMUNICATIONS AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

At the start of the assignment the contractor, in consultation with the Mission Coordination, Innovation, and Learning Lead, developed a communications plan to disseminate key findings and lessons learned from the final reports across relevant USAID platforms (e.g., LandLinks, Mission social media platforms, etc.). Deliverables included at least one blogpost providing an overview of the activity and key findings, a profile of an evaluation team member (in the form of a written or video interview) to provide a "human face" in describing the importance of this work, and a live webinar/learning event for USAID and select implementing partners. To help foster knowledge sharing and collaboration across the Agency, all communications products (including captured video from live events) will be posted on appropriate USAID knowledge portals for easy access and future reference.

In addition, the Evaluation Team will consider dissemination to evaluation participants to the extent that this is feasible (i.e., if it will be possible to revisit some of the remote villages). At minimum, we will ensure that summary materials are translated into local languages and ensure that key findings and lessons learned are shared with implementing partners to maximize their utilization.