



Supporting and Empowering Networks of Women Human Rights Defenders for a Sustainable Contribution to Peacebuilding in the Central African Republic

March 2025



### Duration:

Length:	2 years
Start Date:	January 2023
End Date:	January 2025

### Budget:

<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$2,000,000</b>
UNDP	\$1,500,000
UN Women	\$500,000

### Implementing Agencies and Partners:

**Agencies:**  
UN Women and UNDP

**Implementing Partners:**  
Ministry for the Promotion of Gender, MINUSCA, Women Parliamentarians, Network of NGOs for the Defense of Human Rights, African Network for the Defense of Human Rights, Ministry of Justice, House of the Child and Pygmy Woman, Organization of Young Leaders for Development, Challenges and Objectives (Défis et Objectif), PADDEL (Program for Support to Local Development Initiatives), Network of Women Leaders of Africa, and APSUD

### CONTEXT

Since gaining independence in 1960, the Central African Republic (CAR) has faced ongoing political crises and armed conflicts, resulting in serious human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). Despite efforts by the government and its partners, including the United Nations, the situation remains unstable, with armed groups controlling large parts of the country. Women human rights defenders continue to face constant threats and systemic barriers that limit their participation in public life.

Conflict-related sexual violence remains widespread, with over 1,200 cases reported between 2019 and 2021, though actual figures are likely much higher. Women and youth remain underrepresented in decision-making, despite national laws promoting gender equality.

Years of conflict have weakened social infrastructure and eroded the capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs), particularly those led by women. These organizations struggle with poor governance, limited funding, weak coordination, and inadequate protection for women human rights defenders, as highlighted in an August 2022 consultation.

### OBJECTIVES

- Strengthen the institutional capacities of women- and youth-led civil society organizations (CSOs) in organizational, administrative, financial, and operational management to support their efforts in promoting and defending human rights. This includes enhancing their ability to collect and disseminate information on human rights violations.
- Enhance the leadership, influence, and advocacy skills of women and young human rights defenders, ensuring their equitable participation in peacebuilding initiatives, political processes, and public life.

### KEY IMPACT AND RESULTS

- **Strengthened collaboration and policy influence:** Close cooperation between women-led CSOs, female parliamentarians, and government authorities has significantly advanced human rights protection efforts. These joint advocacy efforts led to the adoption of a new law on December 27, 2024, in the Central African Republic, focused on safeguarding and promoting the rights of human rights defenders.
- **Establishment of an Early Warning Mechanism:** The system identified 222 cases of human rights violations across Bouar (42), Berberati (35), Nola (43), and Bambari (102). It also supports victims by providing referrals for medical care and legal assistance to help them seek justice.

- **Professionalization of Civil Society Organizations:** In Bambari, Nola, and Bouar, 56 CSOs received support to enhance their operational efficiency and governance. They also benefited from capacity-building in human rights, early warning systems, and the prevention of gender-based violence (GBV).
- **Stronger networks and collective advocacy:** Connecting previously isolated women's rights associations has strengthened collaboration, improved coordination, and amplified their collective voice, enabling them to advocate more effectively for human rights.
- **Economic empowerment of women human rights defenders:** Support for 1,000 income-generating activities (IGAs) has helped women sustain their families while continuing their human rights advocacy.
- **Increased reporting of human rights violations:** Public awareness campaigns on legal rights and available protection services led to a significant rise in reported human rights violations, increasing from 50 cases in 2023 to 108 cases in 2024.

## CATALYTICS EFFECTS

### Financial:

- The project successfully mobilized €1,210,000 from the European Union to strengthen the capacities of human rights defenders and expand support to previously underserved prefectures.
- Twelve civil society organizations in Bouar, Berbérati, and Bambari secured funding to implement various human rights initiatives.

### Non-financial:

- The adoption of a dedicated law protecting human rights defenders marks a major legislative milestone.
- The established early warning system is now actively used by human rights stakeholders, including the network, MINUSCA, and local authorities.
- Efforts have also facilitated the integration of women from the network into local security councils, fostering new partnerships between civil society and local authorities.

### Voices from the Field

*"The adoption of this law has been a huge relief for us. It has improved our ability to collect reports of incidents more efficiently. Through our awareness campaigns, communities are now better informed about our work, and local authorities are starting to recognize and support our efforts, which makes our work easier. Our next priority is to raise widespread awareness of the law so that it can provide full legal protection."*

**KOMBO Blanche, President of Women Human Rights Defenders in Bouar**

*"Thanks to the hotline and the phone provided through the early warning system, I was able to refer a case of gender based violence to the judicial and medical services. Within 24 hours of the incident, the police arrested the three perpetrators, who were then prosecuted."*

**Secretary of the Women Human Rights Defenders Network in Bambari**

*"The training on strengthening institutional capacities allowed our association to review our legal framework. Our objectives and vision were previously unclear, and our areas of intervention and activities were inconsistent. After revising them, we successfully secured funding to implement our activities."*

**Dieudonné from Bouar**

*"In the past, we carried out activities in a disorganized way. Now, as part of the network and thanks to the capacity-building sessions, we have transitioned from amateurism to professionalism."*

**Marc from Bambari**