

DRC/DDG NEWSLETTER

EDITORIAL

May 2016

This is the first edition of the newsletter on the joint Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and Danish Demining Group (DDG) project “Building Capacity and Strengthening the Resilience of Border Communities and Authorities in the Mano River Union (MRU) region”.

The recent Ebola outbreak represents an unprecedented shock for many states in West Africa. Overall, Ebola impacted negatively all sectors of the economy in the affected countries, preventing development and prosperity of the communities.

In order to mitigate the effects of Ebola and to strengthen community resilience and socio-economic systems’ ability to better prevent such crisis, in April 2015 DRC/DDG launched an 18 month cross-border, post-Ebola project with financial support from the European Union delegation in Guinea. The project aims at strengthening security and socio-economic resilience of border communities and authorities in areas affected by Ebola in Guinea, Liberia, Mali and Côte d’Ivoire, in close collaboration with MRU security and trust building/restoration Joint Units (hereinafter Joint Units).

This bi-monthly newsletter is an opportunity to assess the progress made more than a year after the launch of the activities. It aims at presenting completed and ongoing activities, studies, publications and achieved results.

FIRST PHASE OF THE PROJECT: RISK ANALYSIS AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC, HEALTH AND SECURITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

During the first five months of the project, efforts were concentrated towards socio-economic, health and security risks and needs assessment as well as on stakeholders mapping. The study took place between May and September 2015 in the four cross-border axis targeted by DRC/DDG and covered 18 border localities in Guinea, Liberia and Mali. In total, 1 166 households were surveyed (675 in Guinea, 389 in Liberia and 102 in Mali). The evaluation could not be done in Côte d’Ivoire due to the closing of borders at the time of collecting the information. This exercise allowed for an analysis of health, socio-economic and security situation and risks in and around border communities and authorities.

The results were presented on September 17-18 2015, at a workshop in Conakry in which participated

This first edition is also an opportunity to introduce the new **Project Manager, Mr Patrick Kathoni**. Mr Kathoni came into office on 3 May 2016 and will be with us until the end of the project. We welcome him warmly and are very grateful of this addition to the project.

Various events and accomplishments are worth highlighting, among others the **presentation of the risk and socio-economic, health and security needs assessment**, the cooperation and dialogue sessions among communities and security service providers, the revitalisation of **cross-border non-aggression pacts** as well as the signature by DRC/DDG and the MRU of a **protocol of agreement** for the creation of new Joint Units. Also, 169 peasant organisations were identified and a **partnership was agreed between DRC/DDG and the National Confederation of Rural Organisations in Guinea**, with the objective of providing support to its members.

We would like to thank all the actors involved for their commitment and the role played in the success of the activities as well as our European partners, who support us in the implementation of the project. We also thank all our team members in the field for their great work, without which this would not be possible.

Warmly,

The project coordination team

more than 40 people, including representatives of Côte d’Ivoire, Mali and Liberia as well as a number of delegates from Guinea. Many of the participants were involved in border security management in areas targeted by the project. The opening ceremony was presided by General Bourema Condé, Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralisation, and by the representative of the European Union delegation in Guinea. Also worth mentioning is the presence of the Mano River Union (MRU) Secretary General, of DRC Programme Manager and of DDG Regional Director. In order to refine the project’s implementation strategy, the participants reviewed in details the different reports presented and identified implementation challenges. Among them were the challenges posed by the cross-

border nature of the proposed activities and the many specificities of each border axis in a post-Ebola context.

Press release and related documents are available on DDG's website. Summaries of the studies and assessments are also available on the website:

Evaluation of socio-economic needs in border areas in Mali, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Guinea: <http://bit.ly/EvaluationSE>

Study on agricultural sectors and cross-border movements on the project's border axis: http://bit.ly/Etudes_fileres

Conflict analysis in border areas: <http://bit.ly/AnalyseConflit>

DIALOGUE AMONG COMMUNITIES AND SECURITY SERVICE PROVIDERS: IMPROVING COMMUNITY SAFETY AND SECURITY

In order to increase mutual trust among communities and security service providers (SSP) and to improve safety and security in the project's target areas, in November 2015 DRC/DDG initiated a series of dialogue and discussion workshops with communities and the different SSPs.

These activities provided an opportunity for the representatives of all parties involved to present their roles and responsibilities on one hand, and to express their security concerns on the other. As of May 2016 **32 dialogue** sessions have been carried out and were attended by more than 1,960 participants. In addition to the dialogues, socio-cultural activities (three football games) were organised among SSPs and communities in order to strengthen social cohesion and foster peace.



« While yesterday there was mistrust among the community and security service providers, today, with what's happening in the field, we are building a relationship and sharing information among ourselves. » - Michel Ferdinand, Police inspector, Thuo, Guinea

These fora also allow both communities and SPPs to identify activities and develop action plans that will strengthen trust and improve security.

STRENGTHENING CAPACITIES FOR BORDER SECURITY SERVICES, COMMUNITY LEADERS AND ECONOMIC ACTORS

In October 2015, DRC/DDG launched capacity building activities for the project's different target groups, namely security service providers working in border areas, community leaders and economic actors in the target communities. In total, **75 training sessions were provided to near 1,800 people**, addressing the following themes: Ebola disease prevention, conflict management education, free movement of persons and goods, basic protection principles, human and children's rights and gender based violence. In addition, DRC/DDG committed to provide assistance to security service providers in the construction of 10 integrated units and new latrines which meet international construction standards.



COMMUNITY PROTECTION MECHANISMS: INCREASING BORDER COMMUNITIES SELF-PROTECTION CAPACITY

Over the last months, DRC/DDG facilitated the creation of 9 protection committees representing all social groups and trained them on protection monitoring and human rights basic principles. Links were established with peace committees created in previous projects, which were invited to participate in training sessions on conflict management and to share their experiences in conflict resolution with the rest of the participants. Indeed, peace committees are contributing to local conflict prevention and management mechanisms in

their communities. During the project's second phase, DRC/DDG will consolidate its support to these local governance instances in order to foster peaceful conflict management and resolution.

In addition, dialogue frameworks among communities, authorities and protection structures were established in the project's target areas. Through these platforms, DRC/DDG aim at increasing border communities and local mechanisms' self-protection capacity.

STRENGTHENING SOCIAL COHESION THROUGH REACTIVATION OF CROSS-BORDER NON-AGGRESSION PACTS

In order to help reducing health related risks in the project's areas, DRC/DDG supported MRU's Joint Units in the reactivation of five non-aggression pacts in the four border axis incorporating these risks into the texts. Authorities and community representatives from Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire and Mali met in Guinea to initiate a discussion on the necessity to reactivate the existing pacts and to include provisions for **potential epidemic**

risk management. The discussion was facilitated by the MRU's Joint Units and lasted three days, at the end of which the parties agreed on the new pacts. The newly added content was initialled, explained and presented to the population. In total, **2,530 people participated** in the reactivation ceremonies of **five non-aggression pacts.**

COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION AMONG BORDER AUTHORITIES, COMMUNITIES AND JOINT UNITS

DRC/DDG committed to collaborate with the MRU in creating and equipping 4 Joint Units in the following cross-border axis: Tounkarata (Lola – Guinea) - Sipilou (Côte d'Ivoire), Koyamah (Macenta – Guinea) – Zigida (Liberia) and Beta (Yomou – Guinea) – Zeoua (Liberia). On 15 April 2016 in Freetown, DRC/DDG and the MRU signed a protocol of agreement framing their technical partnership. A calendar for the Joint Units' implementation is being elaborated by the MRU and the creation of these structures will take place in June-July

2016 based on MRU's procedure manual.

In addition, DRC/DDG also facilitated meetings among existing Joint Units as a mean of strengthening collaboration for effective border security management. Through this collaboration framework, DRC/DDG aim at increasing the capacity of the Joint Units to work as part of a network, to adopt an action plan and to do advocacy before the MRU and local authorities.

A CLIMATE OF TRUST, COOPERATION AND EXCHANGE FOR BETTER ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

Following the presentation of the "Study on agricultural sectors and cross-border movements on the project's border axis" a complementary assessment was made in order to identify organisations and networks operating within the agricultural value chain (production, processing, transporting and commercialisation). More specifically, this assessment was looking at:

- i. Identify organisations and networks involved in agricultural production, processing, transportation and commercialisation
- ii. Assess the capacities of rural organisations and other actors in the agricultural sector and draw a

capacity-building plan

- iii. Extend the available knowledge on the agricultural sector in order to identify production, processing, transportation and commercialisation hubs as well as bottlenecks in the value chain
- iv. Explore the possibilities for strategic investments in the identified sectors, involving all the actors in order to ensure that the investments respond to local contexts, contribute to production and transformation and provide long term developmental results

The results of this assessment were presented to the project's steering committee on March 17, 2016 and a local partner, the **National Confederation of Rural Organisations of Guinea (Confédération Nationale des Organisations Paysannes en Guinée - CNOPG)**, was identified to accompany and rural organisations in their capacity building efforts. Following the announcement of the partnership, DRC/DDG supported the CNOPG in the elaboration of an action plan aiming at strengthening the capacities of the rural organisations targeted by the project.



UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Over the next weeks the project's team members plan to achieve the following:

June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Support the creation of new Joint Units » Provide training to rural organisations » Launch the construction of 10 integrated units and latrines as a mean to support border authorities » Continue to facilitate dialogue workshops among security service providers and communities
July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Launch the quarterly cross-border meetings among security services (Customs, Police, Gendarmerie, Water & Forest) from Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and Liberia » Meet with the National Commission against Small Arms and Lights Weapons Proliferation and Trafficking of the Republic of Guinea on SALW risk education » Further train leaders, Joint Units members and security service providers
August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Meet the cross-border project's steering committee » Support existing Joint Units in the reactivation of non-aggression pacts » Organise economic foras

More information : <http://bit.ly/DDGGuinee>

AREAS OF INTERVENTION

