

## BUILDING CAPACITY AND STRENGTHENING THE RESILIENCE OF BORDER COMMUNITIES AND AUTHORITIES IN THE MANO RIVER UNION REGION

Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and Danish Demining Group (DDG) are implementing a cross-border project in the Mano River Union region (MRU). Through European Union funding, the project targets 16 border areas in four zones: two are located between Guinea and Liberia, one between Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire and one between Guinea and Mali. DRC/DDG works in collaboration with field representatives of the MRU.

**CONTEXT:** The MRU region faces numerous critical challenges including conflicts related to ethnic tensions, poverty, land and access to natural resources. While borders offer significant opportunities in terms of cross-border trade, they also increase security risks. Border authorities in the region require training, equipment and infrastructure in order to carry out their duties but typically lack resources and coordination. Extortion, corruption and abuse of power are problematic in the region, and negatively impact economic development and livelihoods. In addition, the Ebola outbreak has exacerbated existing social tensions.

**OBJECTIVES:** This project aims to improve safety and strengthen socio-economic resilience of border communities and authorities in Ebola-affected areas of Guinea, Liberia, Mali and Côte d'Ivoire. The specific objectives are as follows:

- > Carry out a thorough socio-economic and security diagnosis in the MRU region
- > Reduce armed violence and build capacity of border authorities, MRU agents and communities in terms of protection, social cohesion and resilience
- > Foster economic development and recovery through livelihood activities in the targeted areas through a cross-border approach.

**CAPACITY BUILDING:** The project provides for capacity building of border communities and their local protection mechanisms,

border authorities and MRU Joint Units. Trainings on protection, human rights, including gender based violence, women's and children's rights, and Ebola prevention were provided. More than 1000 beneficiaries were trained in conflict management, accountability and free movement of goods and people. In July 2016 DRC/DDG started delivering Small Arms and Light Weapons Risk Education sessions, training more than 2200 persons in total. DRC/DDG also signed a protocol of agreement with the MRU which allowed for the creation of 3 new Joint Units in areas covered by the project.

**RESTORATION OF TRUST AND SOCIAL COHESION BETWEEN COMMUNITIES AND BORDER AUTHORITIES:** DRC/DDG facilitates dialogue sessions between communities and security providers at the border and cross-border levels in order to implement or strengthen sustainable mechanisms to improve collaboration and community safety. Since the project started, 28 dialogue workshops, 66 dialogue fora and 15 cross-border dialogue workshops took place, with the participation of over 6200 people.

**STRENGTHENING AND FACILITATING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES:** DRC/DDG works with 169 economic associations in various sectors (rice, maize, pork, palm oil, vegetables, saponification) in order to foster trade capacity between communities and to implement cross-border livelihood projects. Various trainings were provided, including on the responsible use of pesticides and planting techniques. Small-scale agricultural tools were also distributed to selected economic associations.

**COOPERATION WITH BORDER AUTHORITIES TO BUILD 8 INTEGRATED SECURITY SERVICE UNITS:** In order to improve border security management DRC/DDG, in collaboration with border authorities, will provide security service providers with infrastructure which meets international standards and norms.

