

## News bulletin

31 March – 7 April 2008

### Highlights

- The Preparatory Committee for the Inclusive Political Dialogue completes its tasks
- Security incidents in the Vakaga and on the Bossangoa-Paoua road
- NGO news

## Background and security

### Preparatory Committee completes tasks

The Preparatory Committee for the Inclusive Political Dialogue, established on 18 December 2007, held the last plenary session on 31 March. All stakeholders in the peace process in the Central African Republic have participated in three months of meetings, resulting in a near-final document that provides the details of the organisation of the Inclusive Political Dialogue.

A maximum of 150 people, with 30% women, will participate in the dialogue, which is to be held in Bangui in the second half of May. The participants will discuss three topics: governance, security and socio-economic development. Security and judicial measures for all participants have been demanded by representatives of the politico-military movements as a necessary condition for the dialogue to be held in Bangui.

Briefing missions to Libreville and Tripoli are planned for the next weeks to present the document to Presidents Bongo and Qaddafi. Introductory missions have been proposed to Félix-Ange Patassé in Lomé and to other personalities, including the new leader of the *Popular Army for the Restoration of the Republic and of Democracy* (APRD), Jean Jacques Démafouth, in Paris. The feasibility of consultations with the politico-military movements within the country is still being discussed.

### Incident on the Bossangoa - Paoua road

President Bozizé flew to Paoua on 1 April to participate in the inauguration of the base of the *Multinational Force in Central Africa* (FOMUC). The Presidential Guard (GP), which accompanied the presidential official vehicle from Bangui to Paoua, and the APRD clashed at Nana-Barya, on the Bossangoa-

Paoua road. Several APRD members were killed and Lieutenant Eugène Ngaïkossé of the GP injured.

### Security incidents in the Vakaga

Armed bandits attacked travelers and vehicles on the Birao-Am Dafock corridor, leading to the border with Sudan, on five occasions in the last three weeks of March. They stole goods and money and temporarily detained their victims.

Under the command of the former chief of defence of the *Union of Democratic Forces for Unity* (UFDR), Mahamat Maki, a group of 13 Chadian soldiers on 15 March attacked Boromata, home of Zakaria Damane, leader of the UFDR. During the skirmish, five attackers were killed by the UFDR and *Central African Armed Forces* (FACA), and four houses were burnt. Four prisoners were taken first to the police station in Birao and then to Bangui. Since the attack, some 500 inhabitants of Boromata have fled in the bush.

Following several clashes between cattle herders and forest rangers of ECOFAC, since 30 March, hundreds of armed herders have set up road blocks on the Tiringoulou-Gordil road at Ndiffa to prevent ECOFAC rangers from passing through. At the root of the conflict is access to water and to grazing land in Saint Floris National Park.

## Current events

### 198 Sudanese refugees in Birao

Over 40 Sudanese refugees, coming from a village close to Um Dukhun in Darfur at 90 km from Birao, have arrived in the provincial capital of Vakaga in the northeast of the country in early March. A second group from the same village has joined them since 22 March, making up a total of 198 refugees. A neighbourhood chief has made a site available to them, awaiting the allocation of land by the town mayor. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has provided ad hoc emergency assistance consisting of basic household items.

### Water and psychosocial support in Vakaga

The *Committee for Medical Aid* (CAM) implements a programme in the Vakaga focusing on water supply and psychosocial support. CAM supports the local population along the Birao-Bélaoutou road to dig five wells in as many villages. Twenty more wells are being constructed in the villages along the road leading to Takamala. Eight boreholes are planned for the Birao-Am Dafock road.

Local committees coordinate community participation in each village and provide food and lodging for the masons and well-diggers. CAM provides the equipment, technical assistance and a small salary for the workers.

In Birao, the purpose-built community centre hosts the psycho-social support programme for women and children. During focus groups the women talk about the impact of the conflict and the violence they had to endure. About 90 women have benefitted from a dress making training.



Dress making training

Focus group discussion

Children between 4 and 12 years participate in art workshops, such as drawing, toy making and puppet shows. Once a week, all are invited to watch cartoons at the centre. CAM's programmes are funded by the Emergency Response Fund (ERF) and the Spanish cooperation (AECI).

For more information: [camcdmrca@gmail.com](mailto:camcdmrca@gmail.com)

## Health and sexual violence

Since May 2007 the *International Rescue Committee* (IRC) has been providing help to female and male survivors of sexual violence in Kaga-Bandoro and Ouandago in the north centre of the country. Survivors get medical help, psycho-social assistance and their communities are involved in the programme.

The protocol on clinical management of rape has been implemented in the hospital of Kaga-Bandoro and the mobile clinic in Ouandago. This includes post exposure prophylaxis of HIV (PEP), emergency contraceptives, tetanus vaccines and treatment of sexually transmitted infections. The medical staff has been trained to use the guidelines and to provide medical care to rape survivors.

Five counselors provide services in the health structures and follow up at home as part of the psycho-social component. The communities in the region are informed by community workers on the risks of rape and the services in place to provide help.

In the ten months of the programme, IRC has helped over 1,000 survivors of sexual violence in the two towns. The Emergency Response Fund has just allocated resources to start up a second programme in Bocaranga in the far north west of the country.

For more information: [boris.varnitzky@theirc.org](mailto:boris.varnitzky@theirc.org)

## Coordination

### NGO news

► The email of *Action Contre la Faim* has changed. The new address of Frédéric Bardou, Head of Mission is [cdm@cf.missions-acf.org](mailto:cdm@cf.missions-acf.org)

► Julien Dupuy, Head of Mission of *Première Urgence*, has left the country. Mahdeb Ben Khelifa is the Officer in Charge. The contacts remain the same. [pu.cdm.rca@gmail.com](mailto:pu.cdm.rca@gmail.com) | 75 57 01 01

► David Perry is the new Country Director of Mentor Initiative. [david@mentor-initiative.org](mailto:david@mentor-initiative.org) | 75 52 37 54

► Orla Kilcullen leaves the position of Head of Mission of *Catholic Relief Services*. Her successor is Jean-Marie Bihizi. [jmbihizi@gmail.com](mailto:jmbihizi@gmail.com) | 72 26 76 60

► Jason Snuggs of the *International Rescue Committee* will be the interim Head of the Bocaranga office and the coordinator of the Environmental Health project. [Jason.snuggs@theirc.org](mailto:Jason.snuggs@theirc.org) | 75 58 52 55

► Doctors without Borders Spain/Belgium closes its office at Kaga Bandoro. The activities on the Kaga Bandoro-Ouandago road will be taken over by the *International Rescue Committee*.

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