

## News bulletin

24 - 31 March 2008

### Highlights

- Démafourth political leader of APRD
- Findings of IMF mission on 6 - 20 March
- Abductions, looting and rape during attacks in the southeast of the Central African Republic
- Agreement between the Government and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA)

## Background and security

### Démafourth is the new political leader of APRD

A former Minister of Defense living in France, Jean-Jacques Démafourth, declared on 26 March that he is the new head of the *Popular Army for the Restoration of the Republic and Democracy* (APRD), a militant group active in the northwest of CAR. In an interview with *Radio France International* (RFI) Démafourth announced that the APRD would now be represented in the inclusive political dialogue. Until now, the group had refused to participate in the preparatory committee for a nationwide inclusive political dialogue.

### Findings of IMF mission

A delegation for the International Monetary Fund (IMF) visited Bangui from 6 to 20 March to conduct the second review of a Government program supported by the IMF's Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF). After meeting with the Central African authorities, central bank officials, representatives of the private sector and civil society, and donors, the IMF mission said: *"In 2007 economic recovery continued, with real GDP growth exceeding 4 percent and inflation declining to about 1 percent. [...] The objectives for 2008 aim at sustaining growth at around 5 percent while preserving the macroeconomic and fiscal discipline. [...] Notwithstanding some setbacks, overall performance under the PRGF-supported program has been satisfactory and, subject to approval by Fund management and continued implementation of program policies, the IMF Executive Board is expected to consider the second review under the PRGF arrangement in June 2008."*

## Current events

### Attacks in south-eastern CAR

From 22 to 25 March, a United Nations team visited the region of Bambouti / Obo in the prefecture of Haut-Mbomou in the southeast of the Central African Republic. The team assessed the situation of the civilian population, who had suffered from attacks and hostage taking by an unidentified armed group.

Based on direct and indirect testimonies from victims, the team could confirm that about 300 armed elements had attacked four villages between February 19 and March 10, and abducted over 150 people, including 55 children. The villages (Bambouti, Gbassigbiri, Ligoua, Obo) are located in the border region between CAR, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan.

Both men and women were abducted and forced to carry the loot stolen by the attackers. Subsequently, nearly 40 abductees were released. Of these, several women said they had been raped. None of the 55 children under the age of 15 were released. Fearing resurging violence, many people in the region have abandoned their villages and are now hiding in the bush at night.

### Agreement between Government and UNFPA

On 22 March, the Central African Government and the *United Nations Population Fund* (UNFPA) signed a Work Plan for 2008 derived from UNFPA's cooperation programme, the Country Programme 2007 - 2011 Action Plan. The implementation of the work plan will cost almost FCFA 1.4 billion.

The signed plan covers three main areas, namely (i) population and development, (ii) reproductive health and HIV / AIDS and (iii) gender.

### Road Kaga Bandoro and Ouandago

The *Aid Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development* (ACTED) an international NGO, has started the reconstruction of 48 km. of unpaved road between Kaga Bandoro and Ouandago in the central northern part of the country. The road is used by traders and for the delivery of humanitarian aid to displaced people in Kabo. The reconstruction will help the social and economic development of the region. Using a method of High Intensity Labour, close to 30 teams and 435 workers participate in the reconstruction works. Men and women recruited in the villages and hamlets along the road are rotating

every 15 to 18 days to allow a maximum of families to benefit from the income generated.



Local workers laying foundations for 48 km of road

The *European Commission Humanitarian Aid Department* (ECHO) is funding the project and the *World Food Programme* (WFP) provides two tons of food rations for the workers every day. New road rehabilitation projects are being planned for other regions so that they also benefit from the impact of improved traffic.

For more information: [yannick.deville@acted.org](mailto:yannick.deville@acted.org)

### Interactive Radio for Justice

*Interactive Radio For Justice* (IRFJ) is a project working in regions where the *International Criminal Court* (ICC) conducts investigations. The project was designed to encourage dialogue between people and national and international authorities responsible to ensure legal services. In January 2008, in partnership with the local radio Ndeke Luka, IRFJ initiated a pilot project.

In February 2008, IRFJ and Ndeke Luka, organized a public meeting with ICC Prosecutor Luis Moreno. More than 350 citizens of Bangui and its surroundings came with questions and described their own experiences to the Prosecutor. The various discussions and interviews with Louis Moreno were recorded and broadcast in French and in Sango, the national language.

IRJ is mainly funded by the John D. and Catherine T. Mac Arthur foundation. Any financing of IRJ is administered by the American NGO Collaborative Insight.

### French Red Cross improves clean water

The French Red Cross (FRC) began its water and sanitation programme in September 2006 in the

prefecture of Kémo. The overall aim is to improve conditions of the population and individual behavior in terms of hygiene by a broad public awareness campaign.

The specific objectives are to reduce water-borne diseases and to improve health and hygiene through access to drinking water, adequate sanitation facilities, and the rehabilitation of old water points.

To date, the work has already started in Sibut, 8 wells are being built and 80 water holes should be rehabilitated during the 1<sup>st</sup> half of 2008.

Three sources have been upgraded in the sub-prefecture of Sibut and 6 are in progress.

Regarding family latrines, 33 are in progress and 650 slabs have been cast for this purpose.

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Contact us: **UN OCHA Bangui, CAR**

Nancy Snauwaert | [snauwaert@un.org](mailto:snauwaert@un.org) | +236 75 54 22 78

Gisèle Willybiro | [willybiro@un.org](mailto:willybiro@un.org) | +236 75 54 90 31