

## News bulletin

28 April – 5 May 2008

### Highlights

- Epidemic alert for polio, yellow fever and hepatitis E
- Field training of security services on human rights
- Help for survivors of sexual violence by OCODEFAD

## Background and security

### Epidemic alert

The Ministry of Public Health reported an outbreak on the Central African territory since early April of three infectious diseases under surveillance.

A case of wild polio was confirmed in a four year old child in Bangui on 17 April. Two elderly men living in the same village near Bozoum in the west of the country were diagnosed with yellow fever. A dozen of hepatitis E cases were confirmed in the first half of the month: eight cases in Ombella-Mpoko, the province surrounding the capital, and five cases in Basse Kotto in the South East.

The Ministry and its partners are currently conducting missions in the concerned areas to collect more information in order to develop appropriate strategies to respond to the epidemics.

## Current events

### Field training on human rights

Three United Nations agencies have joined forces to offer training on human and child rights and on the protection of displaced persons to uniformed services and local authorities in several towns of the conflict zone in the North West of the country.

The *United Nations Peace-Building Office in CAR* (BONUCA), the *High Commission for Refugees* (HCR) and the *United Nations Children's Fund* (UNICEF) have trained over twenty members of the Central African Armed Forces (FACA) and village and neighborhood chiefs in Markounda on 16-18 April and in Paoua on 21-23 April. The sessions ended with the adoption of a code of conduct by the newly trained agents.

The same human and child rights education workshops are scheduled for the security forces of Kabo (22-24 May), Batangafo (26-28 May) and Bocaranga (July).

### Help for survivors of sexual violence

Often ignored, sometimes treated with discretion, sexual violence remains a sensitive issue in the Central African Republic. Although thousands of women have been victims of physical, psychological, and social trauma, their suffering remains largely silent.

Some women were raped by soldiers from neighbouring armies; others were attacked by rebels or national soldiers in conflict areas. Many are everyday victims of a society disrupted by years of conflict. Adding to their personal and physical burden, the country's survivors of sexual violence are often denied justice and face rejection from their community.

In order to break their isolation, the *Organization for Compassion and Development for Families in Distress* (OCODEFAD) developed large networks of victims, held group workshops and facilitated income generating activities. Since its creation in 2003, it has opened nineteen branches and gathered more than 2,000 testimonies from women and men across the country. "We have decided to stop victim registration, simply because we cannot provide them with assistance," explains Bernadette Sayo, Founder of the NGO, "but there are many more victims".

With the support of the *International Federation for Human Rights* (IFDH), the OCODEFAD trains victims of sexual violence to collect testimonies. "They are in the best position to meet other victims. Only they can understand the pain and the humiliation, especially in male rape cases." With the help of two doctors, one psychiatrist, three lawyers, several priests, and numerous volunteers, OCODEFAD helps victims put words to their unspeakable experiences.

For Bernadette Sayo, impunity is one of the major causes of rape in the country. "Rape is one of the hardest cases to document before a court. It is very difficult to obtain tangible proof other than testimonies. And how can one testify when the person knows he or she won't be protected from the aggressor after the trial?" But justice is the only way forward. Without it, and because they are stigmatized, victims often live in perpetual guilt. Wives, for example, are often repudiated by their husbands after they have been raped.

With the opening of a preliminary International Criminal Court (ICC) investigation of the crimes

committed in 2002/2003, OCODEFAD can finally ensure the recognition of these victims' suffering.

For more information: [kpakpomakassy05@yahoo.fr](mailto:kpakpomakassy05@yahoo.fr)

## News

### New NGO staff

Nils Sivertsen has left the position of Head of Mission of the *Norwegian Refugee Council* (NRC). He is replaced by Florian Delauney.

Contact: [country.director@car.nrc.co](mailto:country.director@car.nrc.co) | 75 54 79 95

Cédric Perus succeeds Frédéric Bardou as Head of Mission of *Action against Hunger* (ACF).

Contact: [cdm@cf.missions-acf.org](mailto:cdm@cf.missions-acf.org) | 75 56 32 70

Andrès Romero succeeds Delphine Chedorge as Head of Mission of *Doctors without Borders* (MSF) France. Contact: [msff-bangui-hom@paris.msf.org](mailto:msff-bangui-hom@paris.msf.org) | 21 61 23 49 | 75 54 80 51

Antoine Ducasse joins the team of the *Agence d'Aide à la Coopération Technique et au Développement* (ACTED) in the capacity of administrative and financial coordinator.

Contact: [antoine.ducasse@acted.org](mailto:antoine.ducasse@acted.org) | 72 71 51 62

### Strengthening of OCHA in CAR

The new sub-office of the United Nations in Ndélé is managed by Justine Dede, former Head of the Paoua sub-office. Contact: [dede@un.org](mailto:dede@un.org) | Thuraya + 88 216 6700 1253

Séverin Yangou has joined OCHA in Bangui as Manager of the Emergency Response Fund (ERF). Contact: [severin.yangou@undp.org](mailto:severin.yangou@undp.org) | 70 98 70 38

### Emergency team of WHO

The Emergency and Humanitarian Action programme team of the *World Health Organization* (WHO) has been strengthened by technical and administrative staff, including two emergency medical doctors in the capacity of National Programme Officers. Dr Peguy Massamba Martial is based in Bossangoa, and Dr Peggy Conjugo is based in Bangui.

Contacts : (Bossangoa) [massambam@cf.afro.who.int](mailto:massambam@cf.afro.who.int) | [peguymass@gmail.com](mailto:peguymass@gmail.com) | 70 16 51 78

(Bangui) [conjugop@cf.afro.who.int](mailto:conjugop@cf.afro.who.int) | 75 03 33 09

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

## May 2008 schedule

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Mission Peace Building Fund (UN)					CAP Review	
				HDPT - 5 PM		
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
				Mission Mia Farrow - UNICEF Ambassador		
				HDPT - 5 PM		
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
				Mission Mia Farrow - UNICEF Ambassador		
				HDPT - 5 PM		
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
				Mission of the Special Representative of the SG for Children and Armed Conflict		
				HDPT - 5 PM		