

News bulletin

14 - 21 July 2008

Highlights

- \$ 9 million grant from China
- Energy crisis hits hospitals in Bangui
- Assistance to the displaced in Kamba Kota and Batangafo in Ouham province
- Departure of Toby Lanzer

Background and security

Deadly attack near Sibut

On 16 July, bandits, also known as zaraguinas, opened fire on the vehicle of the official representative of the Forestry Ministry, Pierre Ndikini, in the region of Sibut, about 180 km north of Bangui. Mr. Ndikini was fatally wounded and died soon after in the Sibut hospital.

\$ 9 million grant from China

During a signing ceremony of an economic and technical cooperation agreement, Mr. Shi Hu, Ambassador of China in CAR, announced that his country granted 60 million yuan, or \$ 9 million dollars in aid to CAR. The aid package serves to fund projects selected by the Chinese and Central African governments, including the installation of additional transmitters for *Radio Centrafrique* in Bimbo, a town close to the capital.

Current events

Energy crisis hits hospitals in Bangui

With the advent of the energy crisis caused by dated power plants which are unable to meet the electricity needs of the population, the *World Health Organisation* (WHO) conducted a rapid assessment of the impact of the electricity shortages on the health facilities in Bangui.

The findings show that the consequences of the crisis are significant for the functioning of the hospitals. Neonatal incubators, maternity wards, intensive care rooms, operating theatres, blood banks and laboratories are urgently in need of temporary energy support through solar panels or generators.

Better surveillance of diseases with epidemic potential is also crucial, along with a sensitization of the population on the prevention of epidemics. From 21 July to 20 August, a project conducting a daily data collection on diseases with epidemic potential will be undertaken in health facilities in Bangui and the surrounding areas.

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Assistance to the displaced in Ouham

About 1.500 displaced people have been living in Kamba Kota in Ouham province since last February. The situation of the displaced is particularly precarious: they survive mainly on cassava leaves given to them by the local population and they get their water from a creek. These living conditions lead to diarrheal, parasitic and respiratory diseases.

There are three boreholes in Kamba Kota, however, only one is working. Moreover, since there has been insufficient rain, the water level is low and the borehole does not supply enough water for the needs of even the original 1.000 inhabitants of the village.

In Batangafo, 150 displaced households, about 1,000 people, arrived in early May and are now negotiating with local authorities to gain access to communal lands so that they can build a shelter and cultivate crops. Currently, they are staying with related host families, but they often sleep under the open sky within a relative's compound.



Young displaced girls without shelter in Batangafo

To respond to the needs of these displaced populations, the *World Food Programme* (WFP) will start a distribution of food rations as of next week through CARITAS, its field partner in Batangafo. A total of 4,000 displaced people in Kamba Kota, Batangafo, and other villages in the region will receive food for four months, bridging the period between harvests from July to October.

The UN agencies for refugees (UNHCR) and for children (UNICEF) plan to provide non-food kits, including kitchen equipment, to the displaced in Batangafo. The *Norwegian Refugee Council* (NRC), a UNICEF partner who is already supporting the displaced and host population in both villages to educate their children, will distribute the kits.

Doctors without borders Spain/Belgium (MSF E/B) conducted a medical assessment in Kamba Kota in early July. The NGO donated a basic kit consisting of essential drugs, small medical equipment and a malaria kit to the village health post to assist the local and displaced populations with free drugs for up to 1,000 consultations. MSF E/B already offers free health care in the hospital of Batangafo.

3 million Euros for the north-east

The Central African Government and the European Commission signed a financing agreement of nearly 3 million Euros, to be executed through the European Development Fund, for a support and stabilization programme in the north-east of CAR.

The programme will be implemented in Birao and the surrounding areas, first focusing on opening up the region by repairing the roads. The rehabilitation and the provision of equipment for health and education infrastructures are planned next.

WHO opens sub-office in Ndélé

On 14 July WHO's emergency humanitarian assistance unit opened a sub-office in Ndélé, provincial capital of Bamingui-Bangoran in the north-east of the country.

The sub-office will expand programmes providing care for victims of sexual violence and will support activities of other units such as the expanded immunization programme, the reproductive health programme, and HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria interventions.

Coordination

Launch of the revised CAP 2008

The mid-year review of the Consolidated Appeal (CAP) 2008 for the Central African Republic was launched on 16 July in the SOS children's village in Ouango. The event was chaired by Marie-Solange Pagonendji-Ndakala, Minister of Social Affairs. Other speakers included Toby Lanzer, UN Humanitarian Coordinator, Jean-Nicolas Marti, Head of Delegation of the *International Committee of the Red Cross* (ICRC) and Boris Varnitzky,

Country Director of the *International Rescue Committee* (IRC).

The ceremony was attended by 60 participants from government, the international community, humanitarian professionals, and the media. The audience was reminded that \$114 million is required to appropriately respond to humanitarian needs in the conflict struck zones in the north and the south east of the country. Over \$70 million has already been given and donors were encouraged to fill the resource gap.

Departure of Toby Lanzer

Toby Lanzer, who has been the United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in CAR for two years, left the country on 17 July. During his tenure, significant progress was made including the adoption of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper in September 2007 and the resource mobilization for its implementation through the Round Table in Brussels the following month.

During various missions abroad, Toby Lanzer drew the attention of the international community to the precarious humanitarian situation and the suffering of the Central Africans. Thus, today 23 international NGOs are operating in the country, compared to six in 2006, and considerable amounts were disbursed for the humanitarian response.

Mr. Lanzer will next occupy the post of Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator for northern Sudan. Mai Moussa Abari, FAO representative in CAR, will serve as interim coordinator until the arrival of Mr. Lanzer's successor.

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