

## News bulletin

8 - 15 September 2008

### Highlights

- People fleeing to the bush in the north-west
- Socio-economic assessment in the south-eastern provinces by ACTED
- 70 participants in the workshop on the humanitarian strategy for 2009

## Background and security

### Resuming peace talks in Libreville

Talks between the Central African Government and leaders of rebel movements are set to start in Libreville, Gabon on 15 September. The negotiations, in which Francois Lonseny-Fall, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General in CAR is participating, aim at removing obstacles to the country's faltering peace process.

### People fleeing to the bush in the north-west

A government army contingent was reportedly ambushed on 9 September by the *Popular Army for the Restoration of Democracy* (APRD) at Kounang, a village on the Ndim – Ngaoundaye road in the far north-west of CAR. The skirmish left one soldier dead and three wounded. Clashes are also reported to have occurred on the Bang-Bocaranga road last week, causing the death of several APRD fighters.

Along the roads in the north-west where clashes occurred in recent weeks between government forces and APRD rebels, thousands of people have fled to the bush. Entire villages are deserted while others are occupied during the day, but empty at night. Consultations at health centres have dropped, as people are too scared to come out of their hiding places to seek health care.

### Magistrates back to work

In spite of the adoption of the law reforming the Supreme Council of Magistrates on 5 September, which Central African magistrates strongly opposed, the Association of Central African Magistrates, called upon all members to resume work on 15 September. However, the magistrates also submitted the case to the Constitutional court for it

to judge on the conformity of the law with the country's constitution.

The magistrates' strike, initiated to contest the bill, has paralyzed the judicial system in CAR over the last two months.

## Current events

### Socio-economic assessment in the south-east

The *Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development* (ACTED), a French NGO, conducted a socio-economic assessment between 12 July and 9 August in four provinces in the south-east, namely Ouaka, Basse-Kotto, Mbomou and Haut-Mbomou. ACTED gathered socio-economic data, evaluated the condition of the roads and the transport systems, and made a list of community organizations working in Haut-Mbomou.



Bridge on the main road between Bangassou and Zémio

Noting the degradation of roads and social infrastructure, as well as the lack of support for socio-economic recovery, ACTED made the following recommendations:

- Rehabilitate roads and bridges, especially National Route 2, to open up villages and provinces to the rest of the country
- Support the health sector with the rehabilitation of infrastructure, health personnel training, and drug supply and management
- Support the education sector with the rehabilitation of infrastructure and teacher training
- Provide technical and material support to the agricultural sector to increase productivity

In Haut-Mbomou province, ACTED counted 21 community organizations supporting the population with, amongst other things, the construction of schools and literacy centres, awareness-raising on HIV/AIDS and the rehabilitation of bridges.

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## Wild polio in Markounda

A case of wild polio was confirmed in a young woman of 25 in Markounda in the north-west of the country. Laboratory tests to determine the origin of the virus are being carried out. An immunization campaign is planned for the whole country from 19 to 21 September with the support of the *World Health Organization* (WHO).

The health body also assessed the needs of health structures on the Ndélé-Bamingui road and the Ndélé-Miamani road in the north-east of CAR. WHO donated four malaria kits to as many health centers while carrying out the assessment.

## \$ 6 million for the 'Hôpital de l'Amitié'

The rehabilitation of the 'Hôpital de l'Amitié' in Bangui officially started on 10 September. China, which had financed the construction of the hospital in 1988, is investing again in the health structure with a donation of just over \$ 6 million. The Chinese government is providing additional support, with a yearly donation of drugs valued at \$ 74,000 as well as by sending a technical team of 16 medical doctors. The rehabilitation project is expected to be completed in 13 months' time.

## Visit of the World Bank

Mary Barton-Dock, Head of Operations of the World Bank, conducted a mission to CAR from 8 to 10 September. During her meetings with the national authorities and President Bozizé, she focused mainly on the food and energy crisis hitting the country.

With regard to the food crisis, a financing agreement of \$ 7 million was signed on 10 September for activities aimed at mitigating the impact of the food price hikes in CAR. In the context of this project, the World Bank and the *World Food Program* (WFP) signed a grant agreement of \$ 3.25 million for a school feeding programme. The money will fill part of the funding gap in the 'Support to Education and Health for All' project, and will provide meals to 145,000 primary school students and 8,000 pre-school children for one year.

Ms. Barton-Dock also stipulated that the World Bank is concerned by the energy crisis which continues to hamper the productivity of the capital's companies and institutions. Discussions on this topic are ongoing and the World Bank plans to involve other development partners so as to support the government in putting an end to this crisis.

## Coordination

### 70 participants in the CAP workshop

The workshop on the humanitarian strategy for 2009, to be formulated in the Coordinated Aid Programme (CAP), was held in Bangui on 9-10 September. The meeting was attended by 70 participants from UN agencies, local and international NGOs, Government (Prime Minister's Office and Ministry of Social Affairs) and donors (Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, and the *European Union Humanitarian Aid Department* - ECHO).

The participants discussed the current context in CAR and scenarios for 2009, and agreed on next year's strategic priorities and a list of criteria for the inclusion and prioritization of CAP projects. The workshop was organized by the *United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs* (OCHA).

Donal Kenneally, Deputy Director of the Irish Aid Humanitarian and Recovery section, and Fatoumatta Mboge, OCHA Desk Officer for Chad, participated in the CAP workshop while visiting CAR from 8 to 11 September.

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