

Central African Republic takes the lead in a global campaign to highlight the issue of internal displacement.

In Central African Republic (CAR) today approximately 108,000 men, women and children have fled their homes – most remain in the bush or nearby towns, too afraid to return home after their villages were attacked by armed groups or bandits.

Violence drives displacement, fear hinders return.

'We've been forgotten. If you, the international community have made it here that means you actually think that we are people.' 74 year old Pierre from Obo in CAR's remote south east, in the wake of an LRA attack.

Reconciliation processes are underway in CAR, and domestic and international attention is turning towards supporting a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

'No Longer Forgotten'

There is a window of opportunity right now to make a difference to the lives of the displaced in CAR and the UN's Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is focussing in on those who have been most affected by the conflict: the displaced population.

It's an ambitious campaign, working with local and national authorities, community groups, NGOs and non-state actors (rebel groups) to support this most vulnerable group. The aim is to encourage the search for political solutions to displacement as well as reduce the number of families who are fleeing their homes. The campaign also strives to find durable solutions for those who can't return to their houses and support for those who wish to return voluntarily.

This innovative project will use creative radio drama, cartoons and awareness building workshops to connect with CAR's displaced people, many of whom have spent years living in fear, just a short distance from their homes and fields.

It further seeks to strengthen the humanitarian response to displacement and to encourage those who have been forced to flee their homes to reclaim their rights within the framework of Human Rights law as well as the internationally-recognised Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.

BACKGROUND

The Central African Republic is one of the poorest countries in the world and basic health indicators remain among the worst in Africa. For every 100,000 live births, 1,355 mothers die during or after childbirth; this means that a mother dies every four hours. Almost one in five children will not survive to see their fifth birthday and life expectancy remains a staggeringly low 43 years. These bleak statistics reflect the reality in urban areas and where the population have access to basic services. The situation is yet more serious in rural areas where the conflict has destroyed what little social and government infrastructure previously existed.

CAR's government is committed to peace consolidation and the political dialogue between the Government and armed opposition groups is advancing. The population of CAR is beginning to believe in the possibility of peace and more of the displaced are seeking to return to their places of origin or to settle definitively in the places where they have sought refuge.

BACKGROUND TO INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN

The UN's OCHA launched its comprehensive advocacy campaign on internal displacement in late 2008 in New York. The organisation will work at the global, regional and national levels to raise awareness of the multiple causes of displacement (including conflict, natural disasters, climate change, urbanization and development projects), the scale of the problem, the plight of those displaced and what needs to be done to support them. In particular, OCHA will aim to strengthen prevention of displacement through increased adherence to International Humanitarian and Human Rights law.

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