

## News bulletin

4 -11 May 2009

### Highlights

- Attack on ICRC vehicle in the north-east
- Official opening of 11 medical centres in Nana-Gribizi prefecture
- Agricultural fair held near Bangui to boost sales

### Background and security

#### Attack on the Birao – Am-Dafock road

On Tuesday 5 May, armed men ambushed and stole the vehicle of a team from the *International Committee of the Red Cross* (ICRC).

The incident happened on the road between Birao and Am-Dafock on the Sudanese border, 12km from Birao as the team was heading out of town.

The men ordered the team out of the car and drove off with the driver, who was set free several kilometres further on. Apart from the stolen vehicle, the team and the driver are safe and sound, and the ICRC is continuing its activities in CAR as normal.

#### Attack on NGO vehicle north of Ndélé

On Friday 8 May a group of armed men attacked a team from an international NGO in the Saint-Floris national park on the road between Ndélé and the north-east.

The men shot into the air before targeting their clearly marked vehicle, which was hit several times but without injury to the occupants.

### Current Events

#### Workshop on advocacy strategies for local NGOs

A workshop was held on 6-9 May in Bangui, focusing on advocacy strategies and techniques for local civil society leaders. The workshop helped to build the advocacy capacity of these organisations as well as their ability to partner effectively with international NGOs and UN agencies, increasing the space for transfer of knowledge and competences.

Following the 2006 analysis of NGOs carried out by the *Inter-NGO Council in CAR* (CIONGCA) and a 2008 follow-up study on national NGOs by the Ministry of Planning and the European Commission,, the workshop was specifically designed to relieve the

identified weakness in these organisations' ability to advocate effectively, mobilise funds and obtain technical support.

Organised by CIONGCA together with the Dutch NGO *Cordaid*, the *United Nations Development Programme* (UNDP) and the Ministry of Planning, the workshop introduced different types of advocacy and their basic elements suited to different contexts

Building on the back of a workshop on democratic governance held in August 2008, this occasion has positively reinforced the decision-making abilities of local civil society organisations.

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#### Food for schools to boost education

35 schools with 5,047 students have each received food aid provided by the 'school canteen' programme being implemented in the Markounda area by the NGO *Jesuit Refugee Service* (JRS) with the support of the Paoua sub-office of the *World Food Program* (WFP).

In the Paoua area, a further 4,000 pupils in 120 schools have received the same food aid via the Italian NGO *Cooperazione Internazionale* (COOPI) and the WFP sub-office.

The objective of these school food programmes is to improve the attendance at classes and reduce the rate of abandonment, to facilitate access to primary education and to reduce inequality in attendance between boys and girls.

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### Health

#### Eleven medical centres for health monitoring

The official transfer and opening of medical centres implemented by the NGO *Merlin* was held on Sunday 3 May in Kaga Bandoro, the capital of Nana-Gribizi prefecture in the north of CAR. The centres each have the capacity to monitor diseases which could become epidemics, and are equipped with beds, medical equipment (including stethoscopes, thermometers, blood pressure meters and an incinerator), and a supply of medication.

Two of the centres, at Ndomété and Dissikou, are additionally equipped with power from solar panels and HF radios.

The official opening ceremony of these 11 newly-built or rehabilitated centres was conducted in the presence of the CAR Minister of Health, other

dignitaries and representatives of the local population. Each centre boasts two latrines and a maternal ward, which will contribute to the reduction of maternal and infant mortality in the area.

The primary objective of the centres is the reduction of mortality and morbidity rates amongst the 60,949 affected beneficiaries. They will also improve access to higher-quality healthcare and help to build the capacity of the medical personnel at the centres.



**The rehabilitated medical centre at Ndomété**

With the support of partners including *UNICEF*, Merlin has developed other health programmes, including a primary healthcare programme supporting pregnant women and infants under 5 years, a community-based nutrition programme and an agreement concerning remuneration of the supported centres' personnel.

This work has facilitated populations in remote areas, away from the main towns, to access medical services.

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## Agriculture

### Farmers' food and marketing fair held to boost sales of agricultural produce

The agro-pastoral sector, comprising 70% of the economically-active population of the country and contributing 40% to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), was celebrated at the food fair held on 7-10 May at Toungoufara village, 15 km to the north of Bangui.

Following two years of campaigns led by the local government of the prefecture of Ombella M'poko, in the south of CAR, to raise awareness of the 'green revolution' and improved cultivation practices, the local population has been left facing poor sales of their produce.

As a consequence, the prefecture government organised the fair, in order to both sell remaining stock and re-energise the population in their activities. The fair was organised in partnership with the *United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)*, the Ministry for Rural Development and two commercial enterprises, the global telecommunications provider *Orange* and the *Central African Sugar Company (Sucaf)*.

Participants from nearby towns of Bogangolo, Boali, Damara, Bossembele, Yaloké, Bimbo and from Bangui itself, presented their produce in their individual stands.

In addition to sales, the fair also provided an opportunity to raise awareness of HIV/AIDS and served to highlight the productive potential of the Ombella M'Poko prefecture.

The fair was opened by the President of CAR and the First Lady, accompanied by members of the government. It has helped to create a distribution network for agricultural produce, in particular focused on supplying the city of Bangui.

At least 350 different agricultural groups, comprising more than 3,000 beneficiaries in total, exhibited at the fair, were able to profit from the revenues generated, and as a result have constructed granaries in their local community to insure increased food self-sufficiency.

The fair was concluded by a prize-giving ceremony, including prizes awarded to the best breeder, best artisan and best farmer, all of which were won by the people of the Bogangolo sub-prefecture.

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