

News bulletin

03 – 10 August 2009

Highlights

- Arrest of five LRA officers
- French visit to WFP food distribution in Paoua
- Official Launch in Paoua of the DDR programme
- Needs evaluation for neonatal healthcare

Background and security

Capture of 5 LRA officers in the south-east

According to local authorities, on Wednesday 5 August the Ugandan Army unit currently based in Obo, in CAR's far south-east, captured five officers of the rebel group *Lord's Resistance Army* (LRA) after clashes in the village of Goubéré, 5km from Obo.

The same sources confirmed that some villagers were able to rapidly warn the Ugandan contingent after the LRA attack on their village.

The five officers captured, including a Captain, are likely to be transferred to Kampala by the Ugandans.

The number of refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo has now risen to 1,500, split between the towns of Obo and Mboki, 75km further west.

Current events

Visit by French Ambassador to WFP food distribution in Paoua

Invited by the UN's *World Food Program* (WFP), the French Ambassador to CAR Jean-Pierre Vidon made a field visit to the Paoua sub-prefecture in the north-west of the country.

During his visit, the Ambassador took part in the distribution of food at Bekila 2, 20km from Paoua, to displaced people who are currently living in the bush too afraid to return to their villages and fields.

The distribution benefited 1,782 people displaced from six villages, who received 29 tons of food including corn flour, salt, beans and cooking oil.

Mr Vidon stated that the aim of the visit was to reaffirm France's solidarity with Central Africans in distress. He cited the various financial contributions made by France since 2007 to humanitarian agencies and NGOs including WFP, FAO, Solidarités, ACTED, and Première Urgence to help provide relief to people affected by conflicts and humanitarian disasters. According to the Ambassador, this support also helps

boost development, improve communication and encourage children's education. This is why France gave US \$650,000 to WFP to help them respond to emergencies.



«The ambassador gives food aid to a displaced woman»

Welcoming the ambassador, the sub-prefect and the spokesman for the displaced community expressed their gratitude to all those working to help them but emphasised that a lot still needed to be done to help them return to their villages and get access to basic social services.

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Social reinsertion for more than 300 unemployed women

The Minister for Social Affairs, Bernadette Sayo, together with the Minister of National Education Ambroise Zawa and the President of the Central African Association of Women Educators (AFEDEC), helped to launch a project for the training and reinsertion of unemployed young women in Bangui on 7 August.

According to Mr Zawa, the project not only aims to ensure professional training for more than 300 women but to identify those who are abroad to encourage them to return. Through the project, he asserted, the women would obtain qualifications in the fields of marketing, public relations, hospitality and fashion.

To further help young women facing deadlines for the Baccalaureate, AFEDEC had organised a refresher training for 210 female students from less stable backgrounds currently in the 3rd and final school grades. This training enabled them to get better results in the examinations. The association also organised a competition to get more than 200 girls express their points of views and aspirations on how the government and civil society organisations can contribute to their well-being.

AFEDEC is currently looking for funding to support orphaned students who have obtained their Baccalaureate 'C' with distinction and who would like to study medicine. The association is also seeking funding to set up a centre for girls not in education who are currently living in Bangui (including those not from the capital) and to continue support to those unemployed women currently being trained, to start in their chosen careers.

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13 August: launch of the DDR programme in Paoua

The Minister of State for Communication and National Reconciliation, Cyriaque Gonda, announced during a press conference on 10 August that the President, François Bozizé will launch the first phase of the information and awareness-raising campaign amongst ex-combatants as part of the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) programme, one of the recommendations of the inclusive political dialogue held in December 2008. It will be launched in Paoua in the north-west during the celebrations for the 49th anniversary of the country's declaration of independence on 13 August.

According to the Minister, this campaign targets the prefectures of Ouham, Ouham-Pendé in the north-west, Nana-Gribizi in the north, and Haute Kotto and Vakaga in the north-east. The campaign is expected to continue until 13 September 2009 and will be followed by the second phase of the project, identification of ex-rebels.

Humanitarian activities

Youth as a key target group for projects

'Youth as a key target group for protection and assistance projects' is the theme of an evaluation mission presented to the humanitarian community by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) on 6 August.

The mission, carried out in the northern areas of Kaga-Bandoro, Batangafo, Kabo and Sido) aimed to highlight ways to improve protection of young people, both those attending school and those not in education.

The analysis concluded that young people aged 15 to 25, both boys and girls, were the principal victims of human rights violations, including amongst others, physical violence, inhumane and degrading treatment, discrimination and sexual violence.

The assessment recommended that new assistance, protection and recovery projects all take into account these young adults as a key target group because, while not only being the victims, members of this age

group were also the main perpetrators of the violations, through their membership of armed groups, and yet also potentially represent a key force for reconstruction of the country, with vital roles to play in conflict resolution and peace-building.

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Needs analysis for neonatal healthcare

As part of the project for the Reinforcement of Emergency Obstetrical and Neonatal Care (SONU), a joint mission between the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Ministry of Public Health took place between 26 and 31 July in some of the major towns of the north-west: Bossangoa, Bouca and Bozoum.

The main objective of the mission was to evaluate current needs, to better reinforce capacities of staff and provide technical assistance to ensure adequate healthcare provision.

In Bossangoa, the mission concluded that the maternity ward is run by a midwife, the delivery room is missing equipment and supplies, the recovery and operating rooms do not meet standards and are far away from the delivery room.

In Bouca, the health centre is run by a general practitioner and the maternity ward by a delivery nurse. The operating room has basic equipment but caesareans are carried out by a paramedic.

In Bozoum, the maternity ward is run by a midwife and the beds have no mattresses. Although the delivery room has basic equipment the operating room is in a seriously deteriorated condition.

The main conclusions acknowledged the serious lack of qualified personnel and medical equipment as well as the ineffective distribution of the few staff with qualifications. The SONU project aims to relieve these deficits.

The mission also supervised basic health training activities and distributed reproductive health supplies for emergency obstetrical and neonatal aid, in order to help accelerate the reduction of maternal and neonatal mortality in conflict-affected areas.

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