

# News bulletin

27 April - 4 May 2009

## Highlights

- Inter-community tensions in Birao
- Hope for displaced people in Bokayanga
- Improved humanitarian access to 137,000 people

## Background and security

### Clash between ECOFAC and farmers

In the afternoon of 30 April in Gordil in north-east CAR, two farmers arrived at the water-point of the *Central African Forest Ecosystem Program* (ECOFAC) with their cattle. This was taken as a provocation by certain elements of ECOFAC.

There followed an armed altercation of more than two hours between ECOFAC, the UFDR and the local population on one side, and the farmers on the other.

Many people turned up at the ECOFAC base armed with knives, guns and even a rocket launcher.

Calm returned by 3.30pm after the UFDR had successfully driven away the farmers.

No injuries were reported by MSF-Holland as a result of this clash, and as it occurred at the outskirts of the town there was no population displacement or destruction of property.

### Inter-community tensions in Birao

On the same day in Birao in the north-east, tension mounted following the arrival of an armed group of UFDR militias.

Eight days previously, the body of a young man of the Kara tribe had been found between Delembe and Serghobo, to the south of Birao. According to the local population, a member of the predominantly Goula UFDR was responsible for his murder.

Subsequently, the Kara community had brought threats against Sheikh Tidjiane, the traditional chief of the Goula community, and the mayor of Birao refused to let the sheikh pass through the town.

After mediation, the sheikh was escorted through the town by the UFDR and the *Central African Armed Forces* (FACA) as far as Am Dafock on the Sudanese border. The tensions in Birao have subsided.

### Delivery of food and non-food items to the displaced at Bokayanga, north of Kabo

On 30 April, 330 displaced households comprising more than 1,700 beneficiaries, each received food rations for a full month and a kit of essential non-food items in Moudou, on the Kabo-Sido road in northern CAR.

Brought by the *International Committee of the Red Cross* (ICRC), this donation represents emergency assistance for the populations of four villages on the road, Moudou 1 & 2, Bokayanga and Kengar.

These people are victims of the recent and ongoing clashes between the FACA and the *Democratic Front of the Central African People* (FDPC), and had fled into the bush leaving behind all their provisions and property.

The food ration comprised 1kg of salt, 60kg of maize, 10l of oil and 20kg of peanuts. The kit of non-food items included 3 skirts, a bucket, a jerry-can, a basin, 2 soaps, 2 blankets, a mat, 2 mosquito nets, a tarpaulin and a kitchen set.

For further information: Noel Audhasse, ICRC, (236) 75 04 21 32, [bangui.bng@icrc.org](mailto:bangui.bng@icrc.org)

## Current events

### Early recovery workshop in Bangui

"Early recovery in the post-conflict context" was the theme of a national workshop on early recovery held in Bangui on 29-30 April.

Organised by Early Recovery cluster led by the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator, participants included member of civil society, journalists, representatives of the UN and of NGOs, and various CAR government ministries including the Ministries of Planning, the Interior, Water, Education and the Office of the Prime Minister. They focused on the development of a national strategy for early recovery.

The workshop has helped to improve upon the lack of knowledge and awareness of early recovery, emphasising the return and community-driven socio-economic reintegration of displaced populations. It is hoped that this will facilitate the eventual restoration of basic social services including health, education, water and hygiene, essential to the consolidation of peace and a strong foundation for development.

Participants agreed to strengthen actions taken at the cluster level, to work closely with development agencies and to form a national network of trainers on early recovery.

For more information: Ibrahima Sakho, UNDP, (236) 75 74 72 36, [ibrahima.sakho@undp.org](mailto:ibrahima.sakho@undp.org)

### The role of youth in the peace process

On 28-30 April, a workshop on “the role of youth in the Central African peace process” was held in Bangui, organised by the Office of the Prime Minister in partnership with the *United Nations Peace-building Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA)*.

The workshop provided an opportunity to measure the progress made since the Inclusive Political Dialogue (IPD) held in December 2008.

The opening ceremony, in the presence of the Minister of Communications and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General ad interim, was attended by more than 60 youth-group leaders from the 8 precincts of Bangui, as well as NGO and UN representatives.

As a result of the workshop, youth leaders will have a greater understanding of the political situation, and be more closely involved in peace-building activities, the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) and security sector reform (SSR) programmes and the monitoring of the IPD.

Young people called for the speedy establishment of a *National Youth Council*, and appointed by consensus representatives for DDR and to the IPD monitoring council.

For further information: Aissatou Touré, BONUCA, (236) 75 50 85 95, [tourea@un.org](mailto:tourea@un.org)

### International Press Freedom Day

“Dialogue, mutual understanding and reconciliation” was the theme for journalists on 3 May, the International Press Freedom Day.

The day started with a press lunch for the heads of both public and private media at the Residence of the French Ambassador, M. Vidon. Guests highlighted current difficulties and constraints, as well as the existing good cooperation between the media and the diplomatic corps.

Activities continued at the *Maison de la Presse et des Journalistes* with the Minister of Communication and journalists from all branches of the media, including a representative from the *Panos Institut* which launched their activities in CAR on the same day. The day included discussion on various themes including the role of the media in monitoring the outcome of the IPD.

During the day, the President of CAR, François Bozizé, together with the Prime Minister and Minister of Communication, for the first time visited the offices of *Radio Ndeke Luka*, a local radio station supported by the United Nations. The President encouraged them to closely accompany the democratic process.

The day was concluded with a reception for the members of the Central African press held at the presidential palace.

### Approval of emergency assistance to improve humanitarian access

US\$144,000 has been allocated to finance an emergency humanitarian response project implemented by the French NGO *Agence d'Aide à la Coopération Technique et au Développement (ACTED)*.

The funds were allocated from the emergency reserve of the *Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF)*, and will be used over the next four months for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of four major bridges in conflict zones.



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The work includes a 23m-long bridge at Ouandja south of Birao, on the main access route to the north-east; a 10m bridge at Kouki between Nana-Bakassa and Markounda in the north-west, and two smaller bridges on the Ouandaga-Batangafo road.

The age and severe degradation severely restrict humanitarian assistance to these areas, particularly affecting medical care and the delivery of food rations for schools.

Via these bridges, more than 137,000 inhabitants of the communes of Nana-Bakassa, Markounda, Batangafo and Ouandago will be able to receive food and medical aid from the ICRC, UN agencies including WFP, WHO and UNICEF, and NGOs such as *Solidarités*, *Triangle* and *Comité d'Aide Médical (CAM)*.

The construction work will generate income for local labourers, and upon completion will permit increased revenues from agricultural exports.

For further information: Yannick Deville, ACTED, (236) 72 29 50 06, [yannick.deville@acted.org](mailto:yannick.deville@acted.org)

Contact us: **UN OCHA RCA**

**Boris Ngouagouni** | [ngouagouni@un.org](mailto:ngouagouni@un.org) | +236 70.18.80.61