

Internal displacement in Central African Republic: a protection crisis

A profile of the internal displacement situation

26 January, 2007

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Through its work, the Centre contributes to improving national and international capacities to protect and assist the millions of people around the globe who have been displaced within their own country as a result of conflicts or human rights violations.

At the request of the United Nations, the Geneva-based Centre runs an online database providing comprehensive information and analysis on internal displacement in some 50 countries.

Based on its monitoring and data collection activities, the Centre advocates for durable solutions to the plight of the internally displaced in line with international standards.

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For more information, visit the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre website and the database at www.internal-displacement.org.

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OVERVIEW

Internal displacement in Central African Republic: a protection crisis

Executive summary

Forced displacement in the Central African Republic (CAR) – along with deaths, physical injuries and material destruction – is one of the main consequences of more than a decade of political instability caused by a series of mutinies, military coup attempts and armed conflicts. The number of internally displaced people (IDPs) is reported to have tripled during 2006, from 50,000 in April to an estimated 150,000 at the end of the year. This increase is largely due to persistent insecurity in the north of the country where the government is fighting several rebel groups. Roaming bandits (so called coupeurs de route or Zaraguinas) and livestock thieves also plague the north, where the state presence – as in much of the rest of the country outside the capital – is weak or non-existent. Some 50,000 people are estimated to have fled across the border into neighbouring Chad, and another 30,000 into Cameroon. There are also reports about civilians fleeing towards Sudan in the north-east.

Among the rebels operating in northern CAR are fighters linked to the previous president, Ange Félix Patassé, who was ousted in the coup that brought François Bozizé, the current president, to power in March 2003. In addition, some of Bozizé's former supporters have taken up arms against the current government, claiming that they have not been adequately compensated for their participation in the coup. The government accuses neighbouring Sudan of backing the armed groups, a claim the Sudanese government has repeatedly denied. In an effort to stem the rebellion, Bozizé has appealed to France and Chad to provide his government with military support in the form of troops and equipment.

Most of the people forced out of their homes by the insecurity caused by fighting and banditry in different parts of the north have taken refuge in the bush, not far from their villages and fields. The most affected areas are the northern prefectures of Nana-Mambéré, Ouham-Pendé, Ouham, Nana-Gribizi (Gribingui), Bamingui-Bangoran, Haute-Kotto and Vakaga.

The displaced have been exposed to serious human rights violations, committed by both regular government forces and the rebel groups. These include arbitrary killings, rape, torture and destruction of houses and other property. Extortion and racketeering are rampant especially in the north-western part of the country. In the absence of functioning law enforcement structures, crimes have been committed with total impunity on all sides.

The displaced are extremely vulnerable as the minimum conditions for an adequate standard of living are not being met. Displaced children currently living in the bush with their parents have no access to education. They have missed the 2005/2006 academic year and are missing the following school year too. In addition, the displaced generally have no or only extremely limited access to health care, proper nutrition, water and sanitation facilities, thus being even worse off than the poor resident population of the remote areas of the northern parts of the country. They are scattered in the bush in small isolated settlements and live in makeshift shelter or in the open, exposed to diseases. Although they sometimes receive food distributions from aid agencies, these are insufficient and many of the displaced are forced to live on wild leaves, fruits and roots.

The response to the internal displacement crisis in the CAR has been wholly inadequate at the national level. Although the Economy, Planning and International Cooperation Ministry appears to be responsible for coordinating the humanitarian response, and the Ministry of the Family for the protection of IDP rights, the government lacks the necessary expertise and resources to deal effectively with acute situations of internal displacement, and a response strategy has yet to be developed.

At the international level, at least until mid-2006, the response suffered from a low level of funding, and weak monitoring, information management and coordination between UN agencies and NGOs. This was partly due to the absence of a humanitarian coordinator between October 2005 and June 2006, and the lack of sufficient humanitarian presence in the displacement affected-areas. The new humanitarian coordinator has started to address the weaknesses of the international response, but there are still too few aid professionals in the conflict areas and the level of funding for protection and humanitarian assistance has yet to match the needs on the ground. The Consolidated Aid Programme (CAP) 2007 for CAR is requesting \$49.5 million for programmes aimed at the promotion of human security, the provision of protection and assistance to IDPs, the reinforcement of local and national capacities and the strengthening of coordination.

The funding and implementation of the action plan included in the CAP 2007 is crucial to limiting the disastrous consequences the current conflict has for the civilian population. At the same time, the government must stop human rights violations committed by the security forces, reinforce attempts to find political solutions to the ongoing conflicts, and seek increased international support for the process of recovery if the country is to break out of the current cycle of violence and instability.

Key recommendations

To the government of Central African Republic

- Appoint a clear IDP focal point with overall responsibility for protecting IDPs' rights
- seek assistance from the international community to develop a National IDP Policy including clear protection and return strategies in line with the Guiding Principles
- through the IDP focal point, seek technical support and training in contingency planning as well as improved emergency preparedness and response to conflict-induced internal displacement
- seek assistance from the international community in order to provide emergency education to internally displaced children
- allow national and international organisations full and unconditional access to IDPs in their places of refuge
- issue clear orders to security forces to respect international humanitarian and human rights law and to end attacks and abuses against civilians (comprising IDPs)
- restore security in the prefectures most affected by conflict and highway banditry

- allow IDPs to move freely and to return to their home areas without fear of harassment or attacks, in particular those from Ouham-Pendé and Ouham prefectures wishing to return or to resettle in other areas
- Do not force the displaced to return home unless safely and voluntarily
- help put an effective end to impunity by ensuring that perpetrators of violence and human rights abuses are identified, including members of the security forces, and brought to justice

To the rebel armed groups

- Issue clear orders to all combatants to respect international humanitarian and human rights law and to end attacks and abuses against civilians (comprising IDPs)
- allow national and international organisations full and unconditional access to IDPs both in their places of refuge and in areas of return

To the National Committee for Human Rights

- The creation of the National Committee for Human Rights with the mandate to promote and protect the rights of vulnerable groups including IDPs is a welcome step that should be followed up by measures by the Committee to quickly set up office and become operational:
- to support the government in developing a policy on IDPs in the CAR
- to develop a monitoring programme with regards to the situation and the rights of IDPs situations in the CAR

To Donors

- Support projects, particularly within the framework of the Coordinated Aid Programme 2007, that focus on emergency IDP response and on more longer-term needs, including development-related programmes in potential areas of return
- support and fund new projects initiated by NGOs planning to establish a presence in the CAR

To the Bureau des Nations Unies en Centrafrique (BONUCA)

- Further strengthen the capacity of BONUCA's Human Rights Division to collect IDP-specific information and to advocate for IDPs' rights at various levels
- further facilitate and support initiatives to establish conflict resolution mechanisms

To the Representative of the Secretary-General on the Human Rights of IDPs

- Pay a visit to the CAR to take stock of the IDP situation, engage in a dialogue and make recommendations to the government on ways to improve respect for IDPs' rights

To the Force Multinationale en Centrafrique (FOMUC)

- Advocate for respect of humanitarian and human rights law at various levels of the government security forces

To the UN agencies and international NGOs in the Central African Republic

- Implement the recommendations of the Multidisciplinary Mission to the Central African Republic (4-11 November 2006)
- in consultation with each other, UN agencies and NGOs should increase their presence in the CAR (mainly in the conflict-affected areas) to provide assistance and protection to IDPs
- where return or resettlement is feasible, ensure appropriate longer-term support in terms of income-generating activities and community development projects closely linked to ongoing recovery activities
- where durable return or resettlement is not possible, ensure appropriate protection and assistance for IDPs in areas of refuge, while urging the national authorities to fulfil their responsibilities in this regard
- carry out assessments of possibilities for sustainable IDP return or resettlement in key localities, in line with the UN Guiding Principles, including “go and see” visits with humanitarian monitors

To the International Criminal Court

- Without further delay, open investigation into the crimes within its jurisdiction committed in the CAR since 1 July 2002

Other sections of the report

Background to the displacement situation

Insecurity: main cause of displacement

Numbers gueswork

Recent displacement appear to be of longer term nature

Civilians in urgent need of protection

Obstacle to IDPs return

A hidden humanitarian crisis

Urgent need for emergency education

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Appalling absence of viable medical centers and personel in IDPs-affected areas

IDPs scatered in the bush surviving on wild leaves

National Response

International Response

CAUSES AND BACKGROUND

Overview

Background to the displacement situation (Special report, 2007)

The landlocked Central African Republic (CAR) which emerged after independence from France in 1960 has never been strong and large tracts of the country remain up to the present beyond the reach of state institutions. Throughout its history the CAR has been plagued by political instability due to the weakness of the state and the impact of successive mutinies, military coups and armed conflicts which have progressively destroyed the limited state institutions, infrastructures and the local economy. The potential wealth of its natural resources (diamonds, gold, uranium and timber) has not prevented the country from appearing on the UNDP's Human Development Index as one of the world's poorest countries during the last few years.

While the state has been unable to consolidate its institutions for nearly half a century, for the last decade it has been in decline. During 1996, the CAR was shaken by a politico-military crisis, punctuated by three successive mutinies by elements of the Central African Armed Forces; these stemmed to a large extent from widespread public discontent over social and economic problems, exacerbated by prolonged non-payment of the soldiers' salary arrears. Despite the signing of agreements between forces loyal to the former president, Ange Félix Patassé, and the rebels, and the presence of peacekeepers with a mandate to oversee their implementation, different parts of the territory remained insecure, with civilians regularly subject to attacks by armed men. Patassé was re-elected in 1999 in elections considered by the international community as free and fair, but armed clashes and unrest were reported in the capital Bangui.

Despite the persisting precarious economic situation and insecurity in the countryside, in 2000 the United Nations Mission in the CAR was transformed into a United Nations Peace-Building Support Office whose main mandate was to support the government's efforts to consolidate peace and national reconciliation. Mounting political tensions aggravated by the government's refusal to engage in a dialogue with the opposition, simmering social tensions and further economic decline culminated in the failed military coups of 28 May 2001 and of 25 October 2002. As a result of this second coup attempt, suspected to have been carried out by the former army chief of staff, General François Bozizé, the regional organisation the *Communauté Economique des Etats de l'Afrique Centrale* mandated a Multinational Force for the CAR (FOMUC) supported by France and the European Union, to ensure the security of the president, help secure the borders of the CAR with Chad and assist the government in restructuring the armed forces. Until then, Patassé's political survival was mainly due to support provided by Libyan troops and the *Mouvement de Libération du Congo* from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) under Jean-Pierre Bemba, who controlled the region of Equateur bordering Bangui.

The two military coup attempts of 2002 were part of a series of seven which Patassé survived during his presidency, before succumbing to the second coup attempt carried out by Bozizé with the assistance of Chadian forces in March 2003.

The violent shift of power of March 2003 was preceded by months of intense fighting mainly affecting five prefectures – Ouham, Ouham-Pendé, Nana-Gribizi (also referred to as Gribingui), Kemo and Ombella-Mpoko. It destroyed the limited state infrastructure there, caused the internal displacement of more than 200,000 people – 13,000 others fled to southern Chad – and led to massive human rights violations such as rapes, summary executions and looting by the warring

parties. The country was destabilised as well by increasing opposition from the army and government employees, some of whom had not received their salaries for several years. This led to repeated strikes and protests by teachers, civil servants, students and pensioners, undermining the government's legitimacy and pushing an already fragile economy further towards collapse. Salary arrears, which were partially settled in late 2003 after the coup thanks to the support of some donor countries, have accumulated again since the first half of 2005.

A transitional government was set up by Bozizé. Meanwhile in the countryside, there was persistent insecurity caused by armed clashes between militia groups. Following legislative and presidential elections in March and May 2005, Bozizé was declared winner by an independent electoral commission as the elections were generally accepted as free and fair by national and international observers. The majority of the displaced were reported to have returned home.

There was hope that the May 2005 elections would bring political stability and improved security and the country would start to recover from a decade of crisis. However, the security situation has since seriously worsened due to recurring fighting between a number of armed groups hostile to Bozizé, and the armed forces (*Forces Armées Centrafricaines – FACA*) and Presidential Guard in different parts of the north since mid-2005. Furthermore, the area of insecurity has gradually expanded from the north-west to the north-east, mainly from the Ouham and Ouham-Pendé prefectures towards the Vakaga region bordering Darfur in Sudan. The northern provinces of the CAR bordering Cameroon, Chad and Darfur – Ouham-Pendé, Ouham, Bamingui-Bangoran and Vakaga – remain volatile because of the presence of former Chadian troops, the FACA and the Presidential Guard, CAR rebels, highway bandits and Chadian rebels, leading to killing, looting and kidnapping of civilians.

More than a year after the first major attacks, in September 2005, the precise political agenda, the source of financing, the political support and the rear bases of the different rebel groups are unclear. However, the identity of the armed groups seems to be known; the rebels reportedly include former members of Patassé's presidential security forces as well as demobilised fighters who took part in a previous rebellion led by the current president. The *Union des Forces Démocratiques pour le Rassemblement* (UFDR) is a coalition of rebel groups including the so called "ex-liberators" who helped overthrow Patassé in March 2003, and who were not paid what they were promised for their support.

The CAR government has accused Patassé and Sudan of backing the rebel movement, something officials in Khartoum and the rebels themselves have repeatedly denied. In an effort to stem the rebellion, Bozizé has appealed to Chad and France to provide his government with military support in the form of troops and equipment. Similarly, the CAR has called upon the UN Security Council to deploy troops on the Sudan/CAR border with reference to its Resolution 1706 which provides for the establishment of a multidimensional presence in Chad and if necessary in CAR.

Background

European conquest of the territory, 1885-1930

- Four major ethnic groups: the Baya-Mandja in the west, the Banda in the east, and the Nzakara and Azande in the south
- Each group has its own language, but most people also speak Sango
- The current international borders are a result of the colonial powers' struggle

- Borders in the French Equatorial Africa were changed by administrative decrees
- The border with Camerun was moved four times between 1894 and 1920
- At the beginning of the 20th century the territory was sold to companies which embarked on virtual looting
- Large parts of the country, mainly in the east is presently underpopulated because of centuries of slave trade

Discoverfrance, 31 December 2002

"While the C.A.R. is a land of many peoples, there are four major ethnic groups: the Baya-Mandja in the west, the Banda in the east, and the Nzakara and Azande in the south. Each group has its own language, but most people also speak Sango, a Ubangi language that spread throughout the country during the colonial era and became an official language in 1991. Most people still adhere to classical African religions, and the arts remain closely tied to this traditional milieu. Large areas in the east remain virtually uninhabited, and most of the population is concentrated in the western half of the country. Bangui, the capital, is the largest city."

Bibliothèque en ligne, 31 Decembre 2002

"Situé au cœur du continent, le territoire qui est devenu la République Centrafricaine a été longtemps, pour reprendre l'expression de P. Kalck, "la dernière tache blanche qui subsistait sur les cartes de l'Afrique aux environs de 1885" (1976:127).

Devant ce vide, l'imagination occidentale a pu dériver de la manière la plus folle. À ce sujet, nous pouvons citer, non seulement la fiction présentée par J. Verne dans Cinq semaines en ballon mais aussi l'imposture scientifique des hommes à queue dont l'ouvrage de J.-D. Pénel, *Homo caudatus*, 1982, démonte les rouages.

L'histoire écrite commence avec l'arrivée des explorateurs européens: Schweinfurth, auteur de *Im Herz von Afrika*, voyagea aux confins du Soudan vers 1870; Junker, quelques années plus tard, pénétra en pays zandé mais l'insurrection mahdiste devait rendre difficile l'arrivée des explorateurs par l'est.

L'exploration et la conquête se firent par le sud, en remontant l'Oubangui et ses affluents. C'est pour des raisons géostratégiques que les Européens furent obligés de traverser ce vaste territoire. En effet, ils cherchaient à atteindre le Nil par la voie de l'Oubangui: Vangèle (1886-1890) pour le compte des Belges, Marchand (1897-98) pour celui des Français. Entre 1892 et 1900, quatre missions eurent pour but le lac Tchad (Brazza par la Sangha, Crampel, Maistre et Gentil à partir du coude de l'Oubangui). De ces tentatives de relier l'Oubangui au Chari, il nous reste quelques récits qui peuvent nous renseigner sur l'état du pays au moment de la conquête.

Parler de pays, au sens de nation, serait tout à fait inexact à cette époque. Comme le remarque C. Prioul (1982: 29): "Vers 1890, le seuil Oubangui-Chari est occupé par des ethnies dont les domaines sont bien circonscrits dans l'espace et dont les us et coutumes diffèrent sensiblement."

Les contours actuels du territoire centrafricain ne furent fixés que progressivement en raison de l'âpre lutte que se livraient les puissances coloniales dans cette zone. On sait que le roi Léopold II de Belgique alla jusqu'à présenter de fausses cartes de la région! Cette situation est parfaitement résumée par Y. Boulvert (1986a: 91): "La frontière méridionale avec le Zaïre, sur le thalweg de l'Oubangui résulte de la rivalité avec les agents de l'État Indépendant du Congo" (1894). Celle, orientale, avec le Soudan est une conséquence de la crise de Fachoda avec la Grande-Bretagne en 1899 mais elle ne fut délimitée qu'en 1923! La frontière avec le Kamerun allemand fut, sur une profondeur atteignant 300 km, déplacée quatre fois entre 1894 et 1920. Quant aux frontières avec le Tchad et le Congo, il ne s'agissait, du temps de l'Afrique Équatoriale Française, que de limites administratives pouvant être modifiées par simple décret."

En 1897, fut créé par la France le territoire de l'Oubangui-Chari et d'octobre 1901 à janvier 1910 furent pris une série de décrets instituant l'Afrique Équatoriale Française dont le Gouverneur Général siégeait à Brazzaville. Cependant, à la même époque, le pays fut vendu pour son exploitation aux compagnies concessionnaires qui se livrèrent à un véritable pillage (cf. Coquery-Vidrovitch, 1972). André Gide, dans son Voyage au Congo, publié en 1927, dénonça les exactions de certains de leurs agents. Les populations locales, saignées à blanc, se révoltèrent: la plus célèbre de ces révoltes fut la guerre de kongo-wara (guerre des manches de hoes) en pays gbaya, qui dura de 1924 à 1930 environ. La colonisation fut vécue comme un véritable traumatisme par les habitants de cette région qui, outre le travail forcé et le portage, eurent à subir les déplacements de populations, la réquisition des hommes pour la construction du chemin de fer Congo-Océan sans compter l'impôt et l'enrôlement "volontaire" lors des deux dernières guerres mondiales.

La "mission civilisatrice" de la France fut longtemps réduite à l'implantation de postes administratifs, au tracé de quelques routes (surtout à partir de 1920 grâce aux efforts du Gouverneur Lamblin et... des indigènes). On lui doit aussi la propagation du christianisme sous l'égide de Monseigneur Augouard. Faisant le bilan de ces années, l'historien P. Kalck considère l'Oubangui-Chari comme "la plus délaissée des colonies" (1976: 221). D'ailleurs, les chiffres de la population européenne au début de la colonisation confirment bien que le pays était sous-administré: l'Oubangui comptait en 1906 148 Européens et assimilés, 348 en 1911, 261 en 1921 et 327 en 1926. Quant à la population indigène, le recensement de 1926 donnait le chiffre de 1066444 habitants mais l'administrateur Bruel faisait remarquer qu'il existait une étendue déserte d'environ 170 000 km² le long de la frontière du Soudan anglo-égyptien: "C'est dans l'ancien Dar Fertit (pays des esclaves) où depuis des siècles sans doute, on est venu chasser l'esclave de bien des coins de l'horizon. Les Ouadaïens, les Foriens, les Nubiens, les Égyptiens y faisaient encore, il y a 50 ans, des incursions annuelles.[...] (Ces régions) de mémoire d'hommes, étaient peuplées il y a 40 à 50 ans; des traces de villages subsistent et des témoins." (Bruel cité par Boulvert 1986 b: 25).

Pillée par les razzias esclavagistes, meurtrie par la colonisation, la population centrafricaine est encore en majorité rurale. Elle reste, en dépit de l'attrait du monde moderne, encore largement attachée à ses coutumes et à ses langues régionales."

The French colonisation, 1885-1976

- France occupied the northern banks of the Oubangui river in 1889 further to an agreement with Belgium
- The interior was consequently exposed to capitalist enterprises which forced the local population to work for them
- The territory was included in French Equatorial Africa in 1910
- The local population revolted against the repressive french colonisation
- Around 50 percent of the population may have perished between 1890 and 1940 as a consequence of malnutrition, forced labour and diseases

Leclerc Jacques, 8 June 2003

"Vers 1885, des explorateurs belges découvrirent le cours inférieur de l'Oubangui. Les territoires situés de part et d'autre du fleuve furent partagés ensuite entre la Belgique et la France. En 1889 fut fondé, sur la rive droite de l'Oubangui, un premier poste français appelé Bangui. Le pays s'appelait alors l'Oubangui-Chari.

Le territoire fut alors livré à l'exploitation des sociétés capitalistes qui soumirent les populations aux travaux forcés. En 1903, l'Oubangui-Chari devint une colonie française, laquelle fut intégrée, en 1910, à l'Afrique équatoriale française (AEF), dont le gouverneur général siégeait à Brazzaville (Congo). De tous les territoires de l'Empire colonial français, l'Oubangui-Chari connut probablement l'une des colonisations les plus brutales. De 1928 à 1931, les Gbayas se révoltèrent contre le recrutement forcé lors de la construction du chemin de fer Congo-Océan et refusèrent de payer des impôts. La guerre dite du Kongo-Wara (guerre des «manches de houes») en pays gbaya se poursuivit jusqu'en 1931. La colonisation française fut vécue comme un véritable traumatisme par les habitants de cette région qui, outre le travail forcé et le portage, eurent à subir de nombreux déplacements de populations.

La fameuse «mission civilisatrice» de la France fut longtemps réduite à l'implantation de petits postes administratifs et au tracé de quelques routes, notamment à partir de 1920. Faisant le bilan de ces années, l'historien P. Kalck considérait en 1976 l'Oubangui-Chari comme «la plus délaissée des colonies» françaises. D'ailleurs, le nombre des Européens au début de la colonisation confirme bien que le pays était sous-administré: l'Oubangui comptait en 1906 quelque 148 Européens et assimilés, puis 348 en 1911, ensuite 261 en 1921 et finalement 327 en 1926. Les contours actuels du territoire centrafricain ne furent fixés que progressivement — en 1923 — en raison de l'âpre lutte que se livraient les puissances coloniales dans cette zone. Entre 1890 et 1940, on estime que la moitié de la population périt, victime des travaux forcés, de la malnutrition et des maladies apportées par les Blancs. La colonisation française introduisit le christianisme par l'entremise de Mgr Augouard, ainsi que le développement des premières écoles primaires"

Post-colonial history, 1960-2002

- David Dacko became the first president after independence in 1960
- Dacko was ousted by the military in 1965 and replaced by Jean Bedel Bokassa
- In 1979 Bokassa was ousted in a bloodless coup backed by France and led by David Dacko
- Dacko was in turn overthrown in a 1981 military coup led by Gen. André Kolingba
- Multipartyism was legalized in 1991 and Kolingba lost the presidential election in 1993 to Ange Félix Patassé
- Uprisings by soldiers demanding the resignation of the president Patassé in 1996 and 1997 led to looting and social distress
- Political turmoil prompted UN involvement
- After two postponements, new presidential elections were held in September 1999; Patassé won 51.6% of the disputed vote
- Popular discontent with Patassé mounted as the economy worsened

Discoverfrance, 31 December 2002

"Most of the country's present-day inhabitants are refugees from Muslim slave-raiders in adjacent parts of Africa in the 19th century. The raiders' relentless pursuit resulted in the depopulation of vast regions of the C.A.R. between the 1880s and 1915. About the same time French military expeditions reached the area, and in the 1890s the region was annexed to the colony of the French Congo; subsequently it became a separate colony in French Equatorial Africa. Internal self-government was granted by the French in 1958. In 1960 the country became independent.

David Dacko became the first president after independence. Dacko was ousted by the military in 1965 and replaced by Jean Bedel Bokassa, who proclaimed the state an empire in 1976 and crowned himself emperor in a lavish ceremony in 1977. In 1979 he was ousted in a bloodless coup backed by France and led by Dacko, who reestablished the republic and again became president. Dacko was in turn overthrown in a 1981 military coup led by Gen. André Kolingba. A new constitution approved in a 1986 referendum made the C.A.R. a one-party state with an elected legislature; Kolingba was elected to a further 6-year term as president. Bokassa voluntarily returned to the C.A.R. in 1986. Sentenced to death on several counts of murder, he was released in 1993 and died in 1996. Multipartyism was legalized in 1991. Kolingba lost the 1993 presidential election to Ange Félix Patassé. A new constitution adopted in 1994 allows the president to serve two terms; the prime minister implements presidential policies.

Uprisings by soldiers demanding the resignation of the president in 1996 and 1997 led to widespread looting, despite the presence of French troops. In 1997, Patassé named a new national unity government, but continued unrest led the United Nations to approve the sending of a peace-keeping mission composed of African soldiers to replace the French forces when they departed in April 1998. In new general elections held late in 1998 under terms of a reconciliation pact signed earlier that year, neither Patassé's party nor the opposition won a legislative majority, leading to a new political crisis that was exacerbated when fighting in the neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo spilled over into the C.A.R. The fighting caused an influx of Congolese refugees into the country's capital, Bangui. In February 1999 the UN Security Council extended the mandate of the UN peace-keeping mission in the C.A.R. until November 1999. That same month France formally ended its military role in the country.

After two postponements, new presidential elections were held in September 1999; Patassé won 51.6% of the disputed vote and declared himself the winner. Popular discontent with Patassé mounted as the economy worsened, and amid widespread strikes and demonstrations in early 2001, the opposition continued to call for his resignation. Martin Ziguélé replaced Anicet Dologuele as prime minister in April of that year. In May, after intense fighting in the capital city in which hundreds of people died, the government, aided by Libyan troops, put down an attempted coup by renegade soldiers loyal to Kolingba. Libyan troops again entered the capital in November to put down another revolt by dissident elements of the armed forces, and unrest continued despite international efforts to end the conflict peacefully. Kolingba was believed to have fled the country after the May coup failed, and a government ban on his party imposed in June 2001 was finally lifted in April 2002."

Repeated mutinies and attempted coups in recent years affecting up to two million people, 1993-2003

- The forces behind a coup d'etat on 15 March 2003 dissolved the National Assembly, dismissed the government and set up transitional government
- The opposition and other political forces in the country were included in the transitional government
- The majority of the population and the political classes supported the new political authorities

- The fighting that preceded the coup d'etat on 15 March 2003 divided the country in three zones with devastating humanitarian consequences

UNOCHA, 18 November 2003

"The Central African Republic (CAR) has experienced repeated mutinies and attempted coups in recent years, which have tragically aggravated the already perilous living conditions for a major part of the population of this poor and landlocked country. On 15 March 2003, an unprecedented politico-military crisis has exacerbated the situation since the last attempted coup of 25 October 2002, resulting in further political changes on 15 March 2003.

With the participation of the opposition and other political forces in the country, including the party of the former President, the political and military situation changed with the installation of a transitional government. The new authorities suspended the constitution, dissolved the National Assembly, and adopted new measures for the restoration of security through disarmament operations and the recuperation of looted goods. The creation of a National Transitional Council and a government assigned to re-launch growth and prepare for forthcoming elections was initiated. The majority of the population and the political classes have supported these measures by the new political authorities, particularly the appointment of a charismatic leader from the opposition as Prime Minister.

The conflict of October 2002 was unlike previous crises in that the effects of the fighting were not limited to the capital, but were also widespread in the interior, resulting in the withdrawal of former rebels who had occupied a part of the national territory. For five months, the country was divided into different areas:

- an area under the control of government (named the "green zone");
- an area under the direct control of the insurgents ("red zone"); and,
- a third area with little or no access and isolated from any communications with the capital ("yellow zone").

This partition caused a significant deterioration in the humanitarian condition of at least two million people as a direct or indirect consequence of the conflict."

UN Security Council 20 June 2003

" 3. The period under review was marked principally by the Coup d'état of 15 March 2003 of General Francois Bozizé, who overthrew the regime of President Elect Ange Félix Patassé, thereby interrupting the already well-advanced preparations for the national dialogue on which so much hope was placed.

4. The coordinators of the dialogue, appointed by President Patassé at the end of December 2002, had met all the parties involved, from both within and without the country, in January and February 2003. A first phase of the dialogue was even announced in Rome under the auspices of the Sant'Egidio Catholic Community.

5. The importance of the national dialogue for the future of the Central African Republic seems not to have been overlooked by the new authorities, which have pledged to organize it during the period of transition.

6. I firmly condemned the assumption of power by non-constitutional means in a press release of 17 March 2003 (SG/SSSM/8637/AFR/584). The members of the Council will recall that they too condemned it, in the same terms, through the statement of their President on 20 March 2003 (SC/7700/AFR/588).

7. The new authorities have stated that the interruption in the democratic process is temporary and is designed to enable the conditions for a return to genuine democracy to be established. To this end, they have opted for management by consensus of the period in transition, with the involvement of every political opinion and the other actors of civil society. They envisage a period of transition which would last less than 22 months, the return to constitutional legality being planned for January 2005.

8. The holding of elections is scheduled for the second half of 2004, in accordance with the terms of the statement of the President of the Security Council of 17 April 2003 (SC/7736/AFR/607), in which the members of the Council expressed the hope that elections would be held as soon as possible. The authorities, however, make the fulfilment of this commitment conditional upon substantial assistance from the international community for the restoration of security in the country and the improvement of the economic situation.

9. For the time being, institutional arrangements for the transition are in place: a 28-member Government representing all political opinions (including the Mouvement de Libération du Peuple Centrafricain (MLPC), the party of President Patassé) and even involving the trade unions; and a National Transition Council, which is a consultative body whose membership includes political actors and civil society organizations.

10. General Bozizé has issued an order amnestying those responsible for the attempted coup d'état of 28 May 2001, including ex-President André Kolingba, said to be the instigator of the abortive coup. This act, which is in keeping with his proclaimed concern for national reconciliation, induced many Central Africans in exile or seeking refuge abroad to return to their country. Likewise, the members of the military (numbering approximately one thousand), who had fled in the wake of the failed putsch of 28 May 2001, began one by one to be reintegrated in the army, in accordance with article 3 of the amnesty order. Lastly, ex-President Kolingba, who had been demoted to private after the attempted coup, saw his rank restored to that of Army General on 19 May 2003.

11. General Bozizé has stated that he will not be a candidate in the next presidential election, thereby bringing relative calm to the transition process. "

Elections in 1993, 1998 and 1999 were generally deemed free

- The presidential elections in 1999 were marred by irregularities in voter registration and distribution of electoral materials
- Since 1996 members of the security forces, complaining of low wages and salary arrears, have rebelled repeatedly against the president Patasse who was ousted in March 2003
- There was occasional violence during the presidential election campaign in 1999 including fighting in Bangui between supporters of President Patasse and former President Kolingba

U.S. Department of State, 4 March 2002

"The Constitution provides citizens with the right to change their government at the national level. This right was first exercised in free and fair elections in 1993 that were the culmination of a successful democratization movement led by President Patasse. Patasse's MLPC [Movement for the liberation of the Central African Republic] won both the Presidency and a majority of seats in

the National Assembly. Citizens again exercised their constitutional right to change their government by democratic means through the National Assembly and presidential elections in 1998 and 1999, respectively. International observers deemed both elections generally free; however, the presidential elections were marred by irregularities in voter registration and distribution of electoral materials. Some of the registration irregularities tended to favor the ruling party.

On April 1,[2001] President Patasse replaced the Prime Minister, Anicet Georges Dologuele, with Martin Ziguele, a member of the MLPC party. On May 28, former President Andre Kolingba led a faction of the armed forces in a coup attempt, which resulted in 10 days of fighting in Bangui between government forces and troops loyal to Kolingba. President Patasse retained power with the assistance of troops from Libya and rebel FLC soldiers from the DRC led by Jean-Pierre Bemba. Since 1996 members of the security forces, complaining of low wages and salary arrears, have rebelled repeatedly against Patasse (see Section 6.c.). Kolingba is a Yakoma from the south whose 12-year rule ended in 1993 when Patasse became the first northerner to rule the country. The May coup resulted in hundreds of deaths and injuries, numerous arrests, 80,000 IDP's, and numerous other abuses [...]

In August the President dismissed the Minister of Defense, the Minister of the Interior, the Secretary of State for Interior, and the Secretary of State for Disarmament on charges of complicity in the attempted coup. On August 30, the President named a new Cabinet, most of whom are members of his MLPC party. On October 26, President Patasse removed General Bozize as Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces after accusing him of complicity in the attempted coup.

In the 1998 National Assembly elections, opposition parties won 55 seats, while the ruling MLPC party of President Patasse and its allies won 54 seats. However, the defection of one opposition National Assembly member in December 1998 gave the ruling party and its coalition a one-seat majority. The opposition parties and the UFAP strongly protested this defection and boycotted the inauguration of the new session of the legislature.

President Patasse's first term of office expired in 1999, but he constitutionally was eligible to seek a second consecutive term. In 1999 the Government established an Independent Electoral Commission (CEMI) to supervise the presidential election. Although the CEMI included representatives from many political parties on its board, persons loyal to the President controlled it. The Government explicitly rejected suggestions by elements of the international community, which provided material and financial support for the election, that the executive branch of the Government not involve itself in the management of the electoral process. In August 1999, President Patasse promulgated a decree that subordinated CEMI to the state Organ of Control (OCASPA), a state organization that he had created by decree in May 1999 to oversee the election process. Before the presidential election, there were credible reports of attempts to inflate sharply the number of registered voters in pro-MLPC northern areas, although this was corrected before the polling. The Government postponed the first round of the presidential election, first from August 29 to September 12, and then to September 19, after serious problems in ballot distribution became evident; however, the Government denied requests from opposition leaders for further delays to permit more complete resolution of the problems with the electoral process. Some provisions of the electoral code, requiring publication of voter lists at least 15 days before the election and distribution of voter identification cards at least 8 days before the election, were not respected. On election day, a shortage of ballots was reported in some largely pro-opposition districts. Opposition party poll-watchers reported the use of some falsified voter identification documents by voters, and there were several reports of ballot boxes being delivered to the CEMI without certified tally sheets, or from unofficial polling places.

Two weeks after the voting, the Constitutional Court announced the official results of the election and declared President Patasse reelected with 51.6 percent of the votes cast. Nine other candidates certified by the Constitutional Court had competed in the election. The Constitution required a second-round runoff election if no candidate received 50 percent of votes cast in the first round election. However, only one of the unsuccessful candidates filed a complaint with the Constitutional Court.

There was occasional violence during the presidential election campaign, including fighting in Bangui between supporters of President Patasse and former President Kolingba, and attacks by some opposition supporters on foreign diplomats whose governments' were perceived to have supported Patasse.

The Constitution provides for multiple political parties. The state is highly centralized. The central Government appoints all subnational government officials, and subnational government entities have no significant fiscal autonomy. The Government has not held constitutionally required local elections in recent years, ostensibly due to budgetary restrictions. The Government has appointed four successive mayors, including the mayor of Bangui, the capital, a southern city well outside the ruling party's main political base in the north."

Years of political turmoil, repeated mutinies and attempted coups end with 2003 successful coup

- In a March 2003 military coup François Bozize seized power and declared himself president
- The forces behind a coup d'etat on 15 March 2003 dissolved the National Assembly, dismissed the government and set up transitional government
- The majority of the population and the political classes supported the new political authorities
- The fighting that preceded the coup d'etat on 15 March 2003 divided the country in three zones with devastating humanitarian consequences
- Bozize elected president in the March and May 2005 two rounds of multiparty presidential and legislative elections
- During the transition period recurrent insecurity reported in the north

UNSC, 6 July 2006

"A January 2002 request by the Organisation for African Unity that the Council consider deploying UN peacekeepers to CAR was not heeded. With pro-Bozize forces controlling one-third of the country, the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) decided to deploy a force to CAR in November to replace Libyan troops. The 300-strong force known as the Multinational Force of the CEMAC (FOMUC) remains in CAR.

Libyan troops departed by the end of the year and Bozize gained ground through February 2003, finally succeeding in overthrowing Patassé on 15 March while the President was out of the country. The new president suspended the constitution and dissolved Parliament, promising to hold elections. After initially excluding himself from running and postponing elections for two years, Bozize was a candidate for elections in March 2005 and after a May run-off, Bozize was declared the winner."

UNOCHA, 18 November 2003

"The Central African Republic (CAR) has experienced repeated mutinies and attempted coups in recent years, which have tragically aggravated the already perilous living conditions for a major part of the population of this poor and landlocked country. On 15 March 2003, an unprecedented politico-military crisis has exacerbated the situation since the last attempted coup of 25 October 2002, resulting in further political changes on 15 March 2003.

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The conflict of October 2002 was unlike previous crises in that the effects of the fighting were not limited to the capital, but were also widespread in the interior, resulting in the withdrawal of former rebels who had occupied a part of the national territory. For five months, the country was divided into different areas:

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- a third area with little or no access and isolated from any communications with the capital ("yellow zone").

This partition caused a significant deterioration in the humanitarian condition of at least two million people as a direct or indirect consequence of the conflict."

WFP, 1 July 2005 p.2

"1. La République Centrafricaine (RCA) est secouée, depuis une dizaine d'années, par des conflits internes : mutineries de 1996, tentative de coup d'Etat de 2001, conflits armés répétés de 2002, coup d'Etat réussi du 15 mars 2003. Les infrastructures publiques et les actifs privés ont fait l'objet de destruction ou de pillage à grande échelle.

2. La tenue du Dialogue National et la mise en place d'un Gouvernement d'union nationale constituent les bases de l'amorce d'une détente politique. Une nouvelle Constitution a été approuvée par référendum en décembre 2004. A l'approche des échéances électorales fixées en mars 2005, la mise en place de la Commission Electorale Mixte et Indépendante (CEMI) a été perçue comme une avancée significative. Cependant, les risques d'une crise sociopolitique restent prévisibles si jamais les résultats sont contestés.

3. Malgré les progrès enregistrés globalement sur le plan sécuritaire depuis le 15 mars 2003, une insécurité récurrente caractérisée par la circulation d'armes de guerre, les exactions et extorsions de biens sur la population civile et les prises d'otage d'enfants d'éleveurs par les coupeurs de route persistent.

4. Par ailleurs, les ressources de l'État sont tellement réduites que le paiement des salaires des fonctionnaires à terme échu continue de poser problème. La mobilisation de la Communauté Internationale restant relative, le niveau actuel de redressement ne correspond pas à l'ampleur des dégâts."

US Department of State, 8 March 2006

"In March and May, [2005] the country held two rounds of multiparty presidential and legislative elections that ended two years of transitional rule by General Francois Bozize, who seized power in a 2003 military coup and declared himself president. The voting resulted in the election of Bozize, the country's former armed forces chief of staff, as president. National and international

observers judged the elections to be generally free and fair and representative of the people's will, despite irregularities and accusations of fraud by candidates running against Bozize. The National Convergence Movement ("Kwa Na Kwa")--a grouping of smaller parties, military officials, and political leaders supporting Bozize--won the largest number of seats in the National Assembly. During the year lawlessness persisted in large swaths of the country, particularly in the north and northwest; the government and citizens were significantly affected by insecurity and the threat of conflict. The government and multinational regional forces deployed soldiers to fight banditry in northern areas of the country. Civilian authorities did not maintain effective control of security forces.

...

Unidentified armed groups--thought to be common criminals and remnants of insurgency groups from previous conflicts, including former pro-Bozize combatants from Chad--continued to attack, rob, beat, and rape civilians and loot and burn villages in the north and west."

Situation of governance crisis (2006)

- Since 2005 elections CAR received no substantial economic aid which led to continuous social and economic meltdown
- The state is bankrupt as civil servants have already accumulated 8 months of salary arrears
- The army is fractured with limited logistics and trained human resources

UNOCHA, 11 November 2006, para.7

"7. *A governance crisis.* CAR is, at best, a fragile State in Bangui. In areas that the mission visited, if one assumes the State was even there, it is a failed State. Though it maintains a nominal presence in main towns, it is *de facto* absent outside the capital city. Rule of law is close to non-existent, with widespread anarchy and impunity throughout the country. There is no democratic tradition either. Power transition often means violent coups: since independence, only two presidents have been democratically elected.¹² Besides, the State is today virtually bankrupt. Civil servants have already accumulated 8 months of salary arrears under this administration (not to mention salary arrears accumulated under previous governments)."

IRIN, 7 June 2006

" [...]

There has been social and economic meltdown in the country over the past two decades, which has paved the way for the current upheaval. Since the holding of multiparty elections in 2005 that led to civilian rule, CAR has not received any substantial aid money or investments with which to revamp its economy. The country's meagre tax base can barely meet the government's expenditures. Rather, seemingly permanent social tension reigns, as salaries are not regularly paid.

"Civil servants are now claiming 42 month arrears," said Noel Ramadan, chairman of the Union Syndicale des Travailleurs de Centrafrique, the country's largest trade union.

Without a salary, civil servants are left to fend for their families by other means, which increases the likelihood of laxity and corruption in the public sector. Unemployment has also contributed to the escalation of unrest.

At the military level, so much needs to be done. Since 1981, when Gen Andre Kolingba seized power in a coup, the army has fractured along regional and ethnic lines. In addition, some soldiers are well beyond retirement age in this tiny army of 5,000, further handicapping its battle readiness.

Local military officers and diplomats agree that the army could not crush the current insurgency without external help. In 1996, a force of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa was deployed to CAR to keep peace in the capital, but later it was mandated to help the CAR army restore order in the northwest. However, so far, the force has not succeeded in its mission.

For almost 10 years now, the government has been talking about rebuilding a rejuvenated army, but nothing has been done due to lack of money. The international community has pledged money for this purpose but requires the government to retire overage soldiers and to ensure that soldiers are from various ethnic groups.

"Money from the international community still remains the key need of the CAR to settle some of its domestic problems, and mainly the unrest in the northwest Paoua region," said a military official who did not want to be named."

Since September 2005 CAR is facing a low intensity armed conflict in northern prefectures (November 2006)

UNSC, 7 July 2006

"Starting in September 2005, skirmishes between the army and anti-government forces intensified. Rebels include former supporters of Boizize who claim he has not paid them promised bonuses. Boizize has responded by sending elite presidential guard units into the northwest, which has further provoked civilian fears as these soldiers are accused of burning villages. Throughout the region, armed bandits are interfering with agriculture and commerce, often extorting money at roadside checkpoints. Reports of unrest in the north were confirmed by the government in March when it accused former-President Patassé of recruiting foreign mercenaries along the CAR-Sudan border.

IRIN, 7 June 2006

"What started as a seemingly insignificant skirmish between the army and antigovernment forces in Ouham Prefecture of northwestern Central African Republic (CAR) has spurred a humanitarian crisis in which almost 100,000 people have been displaced.

In September 2005, these forces first attacked the town of Markounda, in Ouham Prefecture, and killed two soldiers. On 29 January 2006, the government reported that 27 people had been killed in fighting between "armed bands" and the army in the town of Paoua, in the neighbouring Ouham-Pende Prefecture, some 70km south of the Chad border. Independent observers put the number killed at 104.

Whatever the case, both attacks marked an erosion of security under the administration of President Francois Bozize and its inability to wrest control of the lawless northwest from these armed bands. The rebellion is in the president's home prefecture of Ouham, from where in October 2002 he led a successful revolt against President Ange-Felix Patasse.

While the government initially dismissed the attacks as the work of bandits, residents in Ouham thought otherwise. They said some of the attackers were Bozize opponents who wanted to undermine his authority because he had overthrown a legitimate government. The antigovernment forces also claimed that Bozize had mismanaged public funds and divided the nation during his three years in office.

Other antigovernment forces - all former Bozize supporters who had fought in the uprising against Patasse - had simply decided to be attacking travellers along highways. As their confidence grew they began attacking the army, as a means of asserting their financial claim: They accused their erstwhile leader of failing to honour his pledge to pay each fighter seven million francs CFA (US \$14,279) after he seized power. Some had been paid 300,000 francs (\$612), but most received only 150,000 francs (\$306), according to an official in the CAR military.

Home Affairs Minister Michel Salley said Patasse's supporters and former government officials had recruited these disgruntled former fighters to overthrow Bozize, and promised to pay them the money that Bozize had failed to deliver.

The armed groups

Little is known about the antigovernment forces, but residents in the northwest say they are members of the l'Union des forces républicaines, headed by Abdoulaye Miskine; the mouvement patroitic pour la renaissance du peuple centrafricain; and the armee populaire pour la restauration de la democratie et la republique, none of which holds territory. While there is no official alliance between these groups, they share the agenda of destabilising the authority of Bozize's government.

The hit-and-run raids in Ouham and Ouham-Pende by these antigovernment forces have presented a significant challenge to the military, despite the army's claims that the aim of these poorly armed groups is simply to remind the government of their ability to cause havoc. Such assessments have led to government complacency and served to embolden the rebels. They have gone on to launched further attacks such as those on the towns of Bodjomo and Kabo in Ouham Prefecture, and on Bozoum in Ouham-Pende Prefecture.

The mouvement patroitic pour la renaissance du peuple cenafricain claimed responsibility for the 29 January attacks on Paoua and the killing of the mayor of Bossangoa, the capital of Ouham. Only in March did Prime Minister Elie Doté first acknowledge the existence of a rebellion in the northwest. Faced with an expanding crisis, the government responded by sending Bozize's elite presidential guards to the area. However, this has fuelled, rather than calmed, civilian fears and led to massive displacement.

The guardsmen have been accused of burning down many villages, such as Kadjama in Ouham Prefecture, based on allegations that rebels had been hiding there with relatives. A high-ranking army officer, who spoke on condition of anonymity, maintained that civilians withheld information about the rebels to protect family members who were part of the insurgency."

France and CEMAC peacekeepers provide military aid to help Central Africa Republic regain control of the north (2006)

- Appealed by the government France helped oust the rebel from Birao in the northeast

- The CEMAC forces and army loose soldiers in the attacks

IRIN, 1 December 2006

“The rebels had seized Birao on 31 October and went on to take Ouadda-Djalle, Ouadda and Sam-Ouandja. They had threatened to take the mining town of Bria, 650 km northeast of Bangui.

After losing these towns, the government appealed to France, its ally and former colonial power, for help. The CAR government said France provided logistical support to the army in the drive to retake Birao, a town of 30,000 residents.”

IRIN, 13 July 2006

“France is to provide military assistance to help the Central African Republic (CAR) restore peace and security in its troubled northern region. The area has endured months of attacks by armed groups as well as counter-attacks by government forces.

...

The French military aid comes after months of unrest in northern CAR. The insecurity started in the north-western town of Markounda in September 2005 and has since spread to the whole northern part of the country and to parts of the east where suspected foreign troops are reported to have occupied the towns of Tiringulu and Gordil. Thousands of civilians have subsequently fled the north.

According to the CAR office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, at least 40,000 civilians have sought refuge in neighbouring Chad while 50,000 others are internally displaced - hiding in the bush to escape violence by armed groups or regular troops.

Past military operations by the regular army and troops of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) to secure the north have failed as the armed groups are well equipped. An attack on 26 June by armed groups in the north killed 14 CAR soldiers and two from CEMAC.”

CAR accuses Sudan of supporting the rebellion (2006)

- Chadian rebels cross from Darfur through north-eastern part of CAR to attack Chadian army in Djamena
- Tensions between Chad and Sudan threatens relative stability in CAR

Reuters, 29 June 2006

“More than a dozen government soldiers and foreign peacekeepers as well as some 30 rebels were killed during a raid by Chadian insurgents into Central African Republic this week, the former French colony's government said.

The rebels -- who have vowed to overthrow Chad's President Idriss Deby -- launched an attack on a settlement in the north of Central African Republic, the government said this week, after a similar raid a month ago.

Jean-Francois Bozize, chief of staff for the Central African Republic's defence minister and son of President Francois Bozize, said in a statement late on Wednesday 11 government soldiers had been killed along with two peacekeepers from a Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) force. He said at least 30 Chadian rebels -- whom Chad's Deby says are in the pay of Sudan -- were killed and one taken prisoner. Sudan denies the charge.

A similar raid a month ago near the northeastern town of Tiroungoulou killed two Central African soldiers.

The Chadian insurgents used the lawless north of Central African Republic as a staging post from which to launch an assault on Chad's capital N'Djamena in April, killing hundreds of people weeks before a residential election Deby won.

Some analysts fear another such attack and warn unrest on the Chad-Sudan border could spread south, exacerbating tensions in Central African Republic, which has been racked by rebellions and mutinies within the armed forces in recent years.

Armed gangs operating in northern areas have killed dozens of people in raids on villages in recent months, sending thousands of people fleeing across the border into Chad. ”

SG Report 27 June 2006, paras 27-28, 30

“27. Since April 2006, rebels hostile to the regime of President Déby Itno have crossed through the north-eastern part of the Central African Republic to attack the forces of the Chadian National Army. On 25 and 26 April 2006, an Antonov 35 aircraft unloaded armed men and military equipment in the Central African locality of Tiringoulou in the north-eastern part of the country, thereby violating the Central African Republic’s territorial integrity. The Central African Government has strongly objected to these repeated incursions and has closed its border with the Sudan. However, there is every indication that armed individuals have established a foothold in the north-eastern part of the Central African Republic.

28. The country’s security situation remains very volatile and, in some respects, highly dependent on the situation in neighbouring Chad and Sudan. The Central African Republic is a victim of the tension between Chad and the Sudan, which accuse each other of supporting rebels hostile to their respective regimes, even though the provision of such support is prohibited under the Tripoli Agreement signed by the two leaders on 8 February 2006. This atmosphere of mutual distrust and suspicion has paved the way for arms proliferation in the subregion, particularly in the north-eastern part of the Central African Republic, which the Central African Armed Forces have been unable to control for lack of adequate manpower and logistics. The Central African Government is understandably concerned about this state of affairs and is requesting support from bilateral and multilateral partners to help it carry out activities to promote the return of refugees and to revive production in this part of the national territory. A subregional approach should therefore be taken to stabilizing the situation in the Central African Republic, pending the effective restructuring of the Armed Forces and the enhancement of their capacity as a means of helping Central Africans to better control the whole of the national territory.

30. The emergence of rebel movements in the northern part of the country, the situation in Chad and tension between that country and the Sudan seriously threatened the relative stability that had prevailed in the Central African Republic since my last report. The area where the borders of the three countries intersect could quickly become one fraught with turmoil likely to attract more armed groups, mercenaries and rebels willing to participate in any action likely to destabilize the countries of the subregion. As a subregional force, FOMUC continues to play a key role in efforts to make the country more secure. I therefore welcome the European Commission’s recommendation to the European Union that it continue to finance FOMUC until 30 June 2007. I call upon other partners to support FOMUC in order to increase its strength and thus help the Government to tackle insecurity in the country.”

Causes of displacement

Insecurity: main cause of displacement (Special report, 2007)

The main cause of displacement in the CAR is the general insecurity – recurrent political violence, all-out fighting between the armed forces and different rebel groups, and banditry. Counter-insurgency operations mainly by the Presidential Guard are one of the sources of insecurity in conflict-affected areas of the north-west because civilians are directly targeted. During the past year, a recurrence of attacks by the rebels triggered army reprisals against civilians the army suspected of supporting growing rebel activity, causing further displacements both internally and across the border with Chad. Some areas in the north-western regions of Ouham-Pendé and Ouham voted during the May 2005 elections for the opposition and not for the current president Bozizé. They are considered supporters of the ousted president Patassé.

Incursions by Chadian mercenaries and Sudanese rebel groups into northern CAR are also reported to have led to the displacement of civilians. The Central African Republic/Cameroon/Chad tripartite initiative, which since December 2005 has authorised the three countries' regular armies to cross their common borders in pursuit of rebels or armed groups blocking roads, and the support France and the FOMUC are providing to the FACA, have not been able to fully restore security by preventing rebel and bandit activities in north-western CAR.

The UFDR briefly took control of Birao and two other towns in the north-eastern prefectures of Vakaga and Haute-Kotto in October and November 2006. Several thousand civilians reportedly fled before the armed forces – assisted by the French military – drove the rebels back into the bush. There were fatalities among both civilians and the military.

Civilians are also forced to flee violence committed by armed "roadblockers" and highway bandits in particular in the prefectures of Ouham, Ouham-Pendé and Nana-Gribizi. These groups have been preying on civilians, for instance by kidnapping the children of herdsman for ransom and attacking traders on the main highways. Up to 30,000 people from the CAR have reportedly sought refuge in neighbouring Cameroon to escape harassment and child abduction, while others remain internally displaced. These are mainly Mbororo, an ethnic group which lives on both sides of the Cameroon-CAR border. They first began arriving in Cameroon from CAR in April 2005 and the flow has risen in recent months.

The easy availability of firearms is a major factor behind the insecurity. The extensive proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the CAR is the consequence of both the internal crisis and recurrent conflicts in neighbouring countries (Chad, Sudan, Republic of Congo, DRC), as well as a cross-border trade in small arms. There are reportedly at least 50,000 small arms circulating in the CAR, which has a population of some four million. Although over the last two and half years a project to reintegrate ex-combatants and restore communities has made efforts to reduce and control the availability of small arms and light weapons, much needs to be done to tackle this element at the root of insecurity.

Civilians flee fighting between CAR army and rebels (December 2006)

- Civilians recurrently caught in recurrent cycles of violence
- Civilians often deliberately targeted by all parties to the conflict
- The government accuses civilians of harbouring fighters of the rebellion
- The northern prefectures of the country are the main affected
- Government unable to restore security and wrest control of lawless mainly in the northwest from rebel groups

IRIN, 19 December 2006

“The burning and looting of villages across north-central Central African Republic (CAR) has scattered thousands of civilians from their homes while the rebels and the army blame each other for aggravating the situation.

[...]

Local civilians say they are being targeted because the government accuses them of harbouring fighters of l'Armée populaire pour la restauration de la république et la démocratie (APRD), a group headed by renegade Lt Bedaya N'Djadder. Over the past two years, the group has attacked and seized control of several towns in the CAR.

Armed with a very old gun, Mizohongo Natouhonjo said a year ago he was an economics student at Bangui University. Pulling out his university enrolment card as proof, Natouhonjo said he had joined the rebels because "our villages were being burned. I could not stay there and do nothing, so I decided to come here and die with them."

Another man, carrying a solar-charged satellite phone and escorted by men with machetes and grenades, identified himself as a senior APRD commander in the Kaga Bandoro region. He said the movement was formed as a response to the CAR army's attacks on villages, and had no support from outside the country, nor links to the CAR's former president, Ange-Félix Patassé.”

MSF, November 2006, p.1

“Fighting between government troops and various rebel groups is taking place in the north of the country. Civilians there, suspected of supporting one side or the other, are systematically targeted by violence or caught in the crossfire. Many villages along the roads in the regions of Ouham and Ouham Pende have been attacked, looted or burnt, forcing their inhabitants to flee. Banditry is also frequent.

In October 2006, after a few quieter months during the rainy season, the level of violence increased sharply in Ouham Pendé, Ouham and Nana Grebizi (and increased in general across all of northern CAR). In the northeastern part, a rebel group has emerged and launched an offensive on the capital city, Bangui, which is very unstable.

Day after day the situation becomes more difficult and security conditions more volatile. This has dire consequences for the population, many of whom are forced to hide in the forest. The high level of insecurity is currently hindering MSF's ability to get adequate humanitarian assistance into the region.”

IRIN, 9 October 2006

“Thousands of people have fled their homes around the town of Wandago in northern Central African Republic over the past three weeks after an outbreak of fighting between government troops and rebels, witnesses said.

Humanitarian officials in Bangui said they had reports of people fleeing the conflict, but aid workers were not immediately able to confirm the number of people involved. Jacques Gonemandji, a motorist who arrived in Bangui from Kaga-Bandoro, a town near Wandago, said on Saturday thousands of people had run into the bush or sought refuge in neighbouring towns.

"There are thousands of them who left their villages to avoid being caught by fighting between armed bandits and the regular army in the region," he said.

Some villagers who could not move southwards had fled to neighbouring Chad, he added.

Fighting erupted afresh after the army sought to flush out rebels who have been operating in the area since the end of July.

Army spokesman Lt. Benjamin Banga-Bekoue said late on Sunday the army was battling "armed bandits" and that a junior army officer had been killed in a rebel ambush on Friday. An army sergeant was killed in another ambush earlier last week, he added.

The latest attacks on the army appear to confirm widespread speculation that the rebel group Armée Populaire pour la Restauration de la République et de la démocratie (APRD) is active in the northwest.

On 2 October, L'Hirondelle, an independent daily, published a communiqué from the APRD that claimed 22 government troops had been killed in three different encounters with APRD fighters in the north since 23 September. The APRD is headed by Bedaya N'Djadder, a former gendarme who defected from the service.

Missionaries in the northwestern town of Bozoum, capital of Ouham-Penda Province, said armed men in military uniform were operating in the area.

On 27 September, armed raiders attacked a theological college in Bata, 7 km east of Bozoum. Following the attack, the head of the college, François Ngoumape, estimated the number of assailants at about 30. Independent sources then said that 10 villages were set on fire, allegedly by members of the presidential guard, around the town of Paoua in Ouham-Penda Province. Some of the burnt villages were Beboura, Korozian, Botona, Begake, Bedamara, Bendengui and Kebe. The presidential guard denied involvement in the arson attacks.”

Outflux of Centraficans to neighbouring Sudan (December 2006)

- Hundreds of civilians flee towards Sudan following air strikes by French jet fighters against rebels in Birao

IRIN, 1 December 2006

“Hundreds of civilians have been fleeing towards neighbouring Sudan after air strikes by French jet fighters against rebels near the northeastern town of Birao. Residents in the region said those fleeing on the road to Sudan were women and children. Most of the men, fearful of being targeted as rebel fighters, fled into the bush instead. Some have been there without proper food but it is not known how many there are.

[...]

The rebels had seized Birao on 31 October and went on to take Ouadda-Djalle, Ouadda and Sam-Ouandja. They had threatened to take the mining town of Bria, 650 km northeast of Bangui. After losing these towns, the government appealed to France, its ally and former colonial power, for help. The CAR government said France provided logistical support to the army in the drive to retake Birao, a town of 30,000 residents.

The army has also retaken Mouka and Oudda.”

Civilians flee highway banditry and kidnaping (November 2006)

- 30,000 people mainly Mbororo fled from CAR to Cameroon
- 46,000 people fled from CAR to southern Chad

IRIN, 30 November 2006

“Some 30,000 people from Central African Republic (CAR) have sought refuge in neighbouring Cameroon to escape harassment and child abduction, the United Nations says. Members of the Mbororo ethnic group that straddles the Cameroon-CAR border first began arriving in Cameroon from CAR in April 2005, but the flow has risen in recent months, aid officials said.

"The eastern and northern parts of CAR are infested with former rebels who frequently assault populations," Jacques Franquin, representative for the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) in Cameroon, told IRIN. "The Mbororo, who are pastoralists, are attacked, their cattle taken away and their children are even kidnapped."

Rebel groups across Africa frequently kidnap children to recruit as fighters or to work as servants or sex slaves, human rights groups say. But William Eteki Mbouma, president of the Cameroonian Red Cross Society, says the children from CAR are kidnapped for ransom. The Mbororo are perceived to be wealthy because of their cattle. The assailants include former rebels who helped bring CAR President Francois Bozize to power in a 2003 coup, as well as defectors from Chad's military and Nigerian criminals, Mbouma said. "They are only interested in the wealth of these pastoralists and children represent a way to constrain parents to pay ransoms," he told IRIN. Franquin said Cameroon has deployed elite security forces to protect the local population and the Central Africans, as cross-border assaults are common. The Cameroonian Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralisation said security forces would escort all UNHCR teams in the field.

Security forces from Cameroon and CAR in 2005 launched a joint operation to flush out the assailants.

Franquin said it first appeared as though the Mbororo people were roaming Cameroon as pastoralists looking for grazing areas, but the number crossing the border in recent months has escalated and people appear to be settling in."

UNHCR, 21 February 2006

"In southern Chad, working with the Chadian authorities, we have started to screen and register an estimated 2,600 Central African refugees in the village of Bedakoussang, 10 km from the border with the Central African Republic (CAR), and 35 km from Goré, the main town in southern Chad. The refugees have been fleeing their villages in the insecure northern CAR following fighting in the Papoua area at the end of January. As of the beginning of this month, refugees were still arriving in the Bedakoussang area.

Last Friday, a group of 321 refugees was transferred to the camp we run in Amboko. We plan to move more refugees from Bedakoussang to camps in southern Chad this week, where we are better able to offer them services.

An estimated 7,000 refugees from CAR have arrived in south Chad since the beginning of the year. In total, there are 46,000 CAR refugees in Chad in three sites in the southern part of the country."

Outflux of Centrafricans to Cameroun (April 2005)

- Former centrafricans combattants attack, loot and kill Bororo cattle keepers in the areas bordering Cameroun, forcing them to cross the border
- The ex-combattants have followed their victims into Cameroun and caused the displacement of an additional 15,000 Cameroonians
- The perpetrators are reportedly well armed and have good communication equipment

- They are also reported to take hostages and claiming ransomes without hesitating to kill upon resistance

"Plus de 15.000 Camerounais et 3000 Centrafricains ont fui leurs villages après les attaques des "coupeurs de route", ces bandits de grand chemin qui sévissent au nord-est du Cameroun, a indiqué jeudi à l'AFP le Haut commissariat des Nations unies pour les réfugiés (HCR).

"La situation est sérieuse et mérite d'être prise en compte, notamment par la mise en place de moyens de réaction et d'une assistance humanitaire", a fait valoir le représentant du HCR Jacques Franquin, à l'issue d'une mission dans les villages de Djohong et Ngaoui (800 km au nord-est de Yaoundé).

Depuis quelques mois, des anciens combattants centrafricains tuent, pillent et prennent des otages dans cette région frontalière de la Centrafrique, les pasteurs bororos étant les premières victimes de ces exactions. Fuyant l'insécurité des campagnes, les villageois trouvent refuge en ville.

"Ils ont commencé par terroriser les populations à l'ouest de la Centrafrique et ont poussé 3000 Centrafricains à se réfugier au Cameroun avant même de les suivre pour poursuivre les exactions en terre camerounaise", a témoigné le gouverneur de l'Adamaoua, Joseph Noutsu, précisant que "les pouvoirs publics ont commencé à renforcer les mesures de sécurité".

Selon une source locale, "il s'agit d'une véritable armée composée d'éléments puissamment armés et équipés d'armes sophistiquées et d'appareils de communication qui détient pour l'heure en otage en territoire centrafricain plus de 50 personnes dont 21 enfants" (Grio.com, 20 April 2005).

"Des "coupeurs de route" venant de Centrafrique ont tué ces derniers jours trois personnes à Djohong (700 km au nord-est de Yaoundé) et en ont pris seize en otage, a annoncé jeudi la radio nationale camerounaise. Selon le correspondant de la Cameroon Radio and Television (CRTV) dans la région, les malfaiteurs ont exigé une rançon de 40 millions de francs CFA (61.000 euros) pour remettre en liberté leurs otages. Décrits comme "lourdement armés" et "très informés", ces bandits de grand chemin ont déjà, selon la même source, opéré il y a quelques semaines dans un village de la même région proche de la frontière centrafricaine. Ils y ont tué le chef traditionnel et pris des otages qu'ils ont ensuite remis en liberté contre 4 millions de francs CFA (6.100 euros). Les autorités camerounaises ont lancé un appel aux populations locales, les appelant "au calme" et les invitant à la "collaboration" pour mettre les détresseurs hors d'état de nuire. Depuis plus d'un an, ces "coupeurs de route", souvent d'anciens combattants en Centrafrique, sévissent à l'est et dans le nord du Cameroun. Ils dépouillent les voyageurs, prennent des otages et n'hésitent pas à tuer tous ceux qui leur opposent la moindre résistance. La semaine dernière, un groupe de ces malfaiteurs avait ainsi tué trois personnes et en avait blessé plusieurs autres, dont un policier, près de Fouban (400 km au nord-ouest de Yaoundé)."(IZF, 13 April 2005)

"Frequent attacks have also been reported in northwest CAR, towards Chad, in an area where fighting was particularly intense between 2002 and 2003. People living in towns and villages there told IRIN of the presence of armed groups.

"There was [an] attack just last week, just 20 km from here," one man in the provincial town of Bossangoa, said in March.

He added that some of the people who fled into the forest in 2002 were still there.

Farther south at the village of Ndjoh, a man told IRIN that attackers only target the Fula (semi-nomadic cattle herders), because they own cows.

"We don't have problems any more in our village because we have nothing left to steal," he said"(IRIN, 18 March 2005)

Opponents of Bozizé killed 20 people in north-east (November 2004)

- The attack came ahead of a referendum on the constitution
- No displacements reported following the attack
- The government sent troops to the area and reported that calm had been restored

"At least 20 people have been killed in a raid on the remote town of Birao in the north-east of the Central African Republic, according to reports.

The attack comes ahead of a referendum on the constitution and as fears mount that the CAR could soon see an influx of refugees from Sudan's Darfur region.

Officials have blamed the attack on opponents of President Francois Bozize who seized power in March 2003.

The north-east of the CAR has seen raids by Sudanese poachers in the past.

Elections

The government has sent troops to the area and says calm has been restored.

The CAR votes in a referendum on the constitution on 5 December and in parliamentary and presidential elections in January.

The last constitution was annulled by President Bozize, when he took over in a coup in 2003.

A government statement broadcast on state radio said one of the aims of the attack on Birao was "to disturb the process of restoring normal constitutional life".

General Bozize is expected to stand in the presidential elections.

The former ruling party, the Movement for the Liberation of the Central African People (MLPC), has nominated as its candidate former president Ange-Felix Patasse, who is in exile in Togo, after being ousted by General Bozize.

However, it is unlikely General Bozize will allow him to return to the CAR to stand in the poll." (BBC, 23 November 2004)

Persistent insecurity may cause renewed large-scale displacements (March 2004)

- Massive displacements followed the military confrontations in 2002-2003
- Fear and anxiety throughout the countryside
- Peasants may decide to abandon their homes if they see their crops being stolen
- The forest doesn't offer the same level of protection as before because of increased numbers of armed bandits
- Refugees from Chad wish to return because of insecurity
- Reports of rapes, extrajudicial killings and torture
-

"During the military activities of 2002-2003, large sections of the rural population sought refuge from urban centres and villages in favour of safe haven in the forests. In addition, some 42,000 have become refugees in Chad. The UNCT and NGOs estimate that there were, (at the time of the 2002-3 crisis), some 200,000 internally displaced persons. Over the past twelve months there has been a steady return to places of origin and today one can generally state that there are no IDPs in CAR, (although small pockets still reportedly exist due to a lack of clothing and a sense of shame about returning to villages located along the roads.

[...] the factors that can trigger a renewed large displacement still exist throughout the areas visited [by a UN mission in March 2004]. Levels of fear and anxiety remain high throughout the countryside and even in some urban centers as Bozum Representatives of the population of this town – women and youth associations, and government workers – indicated to the UN mission in a meeting that took place on March 4 that they fear that the “coupeurs de route” may start “visiting” the town once the rainy season sets in and the access to Bozum from Bangui becomes more difficult. Generally, peasants are sticking to their villages hoping that they will be able to work their fields (even if their seed stocks are scarce). However, if they continue to be impeded from growing crops due of insecurity, or if they see their crops largely being taken away at the end of the season – as happened in 2003 – they may decide to abandon their villages once again. Contrary to the situation in 2002/2003, the forest doesn't offer protection due to the increased presence of armed bandits. Villagers may have no other alternative but to seek refuge in the towns – themselves already stressed and living in quasi-stagnation.

[...]Due to the changed environment, many of this caseload[Chadian refugees] now wishes to repatriate to Chad as armed bandits regularly harass them (related to my mission when we visited the area on March 2 The same tale of despair and anxiety was evident from our conversation with the Central-African population of Boubou, on the main road and some twelve kilometers away from the location(s) where the Chadian refugees live." (UN OCHA, 10 March 2004, p 11)

"In late 2002 and early 2003 combatants systematically raped hundreds of women. Many women, including the elderly and children, were said to have been raped by MLC fighters, who included child soldiers, others by forces loyal to François Bozizé. Some victims were reportedly killed while resisting rape, or died from their injuries. Some who survived were infected with HIV or other diseases, and were abandoned by their partners as a result. Others became pregnant. In most cases, no action was taken against MLC rapists by the government of President Patassé, or against rapists in the forces led by François Bozizé before or after he came to power in March.

- After a woman testified on a privately owned radio station that she had been detained and raped by five members of a Presidential Guard unit in Bangui on 28 October, President Bozizé dismissed the alleged perpetrators and two accomplices from the army. The suspects were detained in a military barracks but had not appeared in court by the end of the year. The commander of the Presidential Guard was also removed from his post and transferred to a provincial governorship.

Female genital mutilation continued despite a 1966 law banning the practice and the existence of a government department with responsibility to campaign against it.

Extrajudicial executions

Both government and armed opposition forces unlawfully killed dozens of unarmed civilians they accused of supporting their opponents.

Numerous extrajudicial executions by forces loyal to former President Patassé came to light. They included the killings north of Bangui of at least 25 Muslims of Chadian origin for allegedly colluding with the armed opposition.

In Damara and Sibut, in the north, an improvised court martial set up by the armed opposition ordered the execution of at least 10 people. It did not respect fair trial procedures. In March a Chadian military commander reportedly ordered the summary execution of an unspecified number of civilians accused of looting. No investigation was known to have taken place and no action was taken against the officer responsible.

In August an army lieutenant reportedly shot dead two students who were among demonstrators demanding better conditions at Barthélémy Boganda College in Bangui. The officer was demoted as punishment, but was not charged or brought to trial for the killings.

Throughout the year armed men, usually in military uniform and believed to be members of the security forces, reportedly killed unarmed civilians. The victims included Barry Okonkwo Norason, shot dead in September. Soldiers at a roadblock north of Bangui robbed him and his brother as they returned from a business trip, then shot them both. His brother was injured.

Torture and other ill-treatment

Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment were widely used by government and armed opposition forces. Chadian troops reportedly introduced a form of torture known as arbatachar, often inflicted on government opponents in Chad, in which the victim's limbs are tied tightly in 14 places, causing extreme pain and often resulting in death.

Soldiers tortured government officials accused of embezzling public funds and other offences soon after their arrest, threatening to kill some of them, including former government minister Gabriel Jean-Edouard Koyambounou. Nearly all the detainees were held unlawfully, often without charge, and were denied the right to challenge the basis of their arrest and detention." (AI, 1 January 2004)

Peace efforts

UN peace-building support office strengthened (June 2004)

- Human rights monitors will be able to operate throughout the countryside

- Judicial assistance to human rights victims
- The office will also play an active role in promoting the disarmament of combatant

" Following a report by General Touré and discussions with the Government, the Security Council and the Secretary-General decided to strengthen the mandate [of the UN peace-building support office] under which he will operate. The peace-building support office will be given more staff, and he will be able to play a more active role in the peace-building process. 'The mandate has not exactly been changed,' explains General Cissé, 'but it has been strengthened.' [...]

Now, for example, United Nations human rights monitors will be able to operate throughout the countryside, and the peace-building support office will provide judicial assistance to human rights victims. The office will also play an active role in promoting the disarmament of combatants. Some of the staff will be involved in 'early warning' to better anticipate future threats to the peace process, and General Cissé will try to work with the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and other United Nations financial and development institutions to help the Government create some desperately needed revenue. But, he says, ' the more involved I get, the more implicated I am in the politics.' He tells of myriad groups and factions in the Central African Republic, all with competing agendas. ' In this bouillabaisse of instability it is not going to be easy to keep them all on my side.' "(UN Department of Information, 31 Dec 2002)

"In implementation of the BONUCA mandate, my Representative in Bangui and his staff will continue to monitor the evolution of the situation throughout the country. To that end, I should like to encourage all parties to take the appropriate measures to facilitate greater involvement of Central Africans in the electoral and transition process which is under way. I also appeal to the community of countries friendly to the Central African Republic to support the efforts undertaken by the transitional institutions for a successful outcome of the electoral and transition process."(UN SC, 16 June 2004)

POPULATION FIGURES AND PROFILE

Overview

Numbers gueswork (Special report, 2007)

Helping and protecting IDPs in the CAR is severely impeded by uncertainty about the scale of the crisis. No systematic and comprehensive survey has been carried out of the number of IDPs or the conditions they are living in. Long-term and urban IDPs are being ignored. Reliable information on the numbers, location, demographic composition and specific needs is urgently required.

However, based on rapid assessments and information collected from NGOs working in the affected areas, it is estimated that since the latest conflict flared up in mid-2005 in the north-western provinces of Ouham and Ouham-Pendé, rebel attacks as well as government anti-insurgency operations have internally displaced some 150,000 people countrywide, sent up to 18,000 into neighbouring Chad – joining the 32,000 refugees who had previously fled there – and an unknown number into Sudan. The number of IDPs has reportedly tripled from 50,000 as originally reported in April 2006. UN OCHA, November 2006, p.IV. It is estimated that out of 150,000 IDPs, 50,000 are women, 70,000 are children and 30,000 are men. It is not known if this number includes civilians reportedly displaced since the 2002/2003 conflict and by ongoing fighting in Kaga Bandoro area, Paoua sous-prefecture and Vakaga and Haute-Kotto prefectures.

Préfectures	Total population	Number of IDPs
Nana-Mambéré	247,223	15,000
Ouham-Pendé	445,483	30,000
Ouham	390,641	20,000
Nana-Gribizi/Gribingui	124,651	20,000
Bamingui-Bangoran	45,737	7,000
Vakaga	55,287	10,000
Haute-Kotto	95,556	15,000
Pastoralists displaced from their traditional routes	30,000	
Total	1,404,578	147,000

Source: UN OCHA, November 2006, p.IV.

Global figures

It is estimated that some 150,000 people remain displaced (October 2006)

- 30,000 IDPs are located in Ouham-Pendé
- 20,000 IDPs are located in Ouham
- 20,000 IDPs are located in Gribingui
- 7,000 IDPs are located in Bamingui-Bangoran

- 15,000 IDPs are located in Vakaga
- 30,000 IDPs pastoralists displaced from their traditional routes

UNOCHA, 30 November 2006

"Since the last months of 2005 and mostly during 2006, around 150,000 people have become internally displaced as a consequence of insecurity, notably in the country's north-western areas, while 18,000 more were forced to flee into Chad. Today, 50,000 CAR refugees remain in Chad, mainly in camps managed by UNHCR, and 20,000 in Cameroon. IDPs in the CAR have mostly fled to the wilderness near their villages."

UNHCR, October 2006, p.5

"... repeated attacks on the civilian population by bandits and rebels, and subsequent military action by the CAR army, caused the displacement of some 15,000 individuals across the border into Chad between June and December 2005, adding to the 30,000 CAR refugees already there as a result of previous conflicts. In January and February 2006, a recurrence of attacks with political connotations triggered army reprisals against the civilian population whom the army suspected of supporting growing rebel activities, causing further population displacements both internally and across the border with Chad. While the total number of CAR refugees in Southern Chad now stands at close to 50,000 persons, there are also an estimated 150,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) scattered in the north-western, northern and north-eastern regions (including approximately 60,000 in Ouham and Ouham-Pendé prefectures, with an estimated 27,000 persons on the axis Paoua – Bémal, 15,000 persons on the axis Markounda – Maitikoulou, 12,000 persons on the axis Batangafo – Kabo – Moyenne Sido, and 6,000 persons on the axis Kabo – Oundago, according to estimates provided by NGOs working in the area)."

UNDPI, 29 September 2006

"Almost one million people had been affected in the last six months by severe levels of violence between rebel groups and armed forces, with the local population caught in the middle. There had been the forced displacement internally of 150,000 citizens in those regions, 50,000 persons had fled to Chad and 20,000 into Cameroon."

Some 50,000 IDPs reported since November 2005 (July 2006)

"Depuis novembre 2005, l'insécurité prévalant dans le Nord a entraîné la fuite d'environ 50,000 civils vers l'intérieur du pays, majoritairement dans les préfectures de l'Ouham et l'Ouham-Pendé au Nord- Ouest. Les populations déplacées ont besoin d'assistance et de protection de la part des structures nationales ainsi que des organisations internationales présentes en RCA, car elles souffrent de la criminalité généralisée et des échauffourées entre l'armée nationale et les groupes armés." (UN OCHA, 18 July 2006)

No more concentrations of IDPs in the Central African Republic (April 2005)

- There are no recent reports on numbers and conditions for the internally displaced people in the Central African Republic
- Short term displacement is likely to continue as a result of banditry and insecurity (April 2005)
- There are reportedly no IDP camps in the country

There are as of April 2005 no concentrations of IDPs in the country according to key humanitarian stakeholders. However, persistent insecurity continue most probably to cause short-term displacements following residual crime and looting by former combatants. (Telephone conversation with field-based organisations, April 2005)

"Although most of the 230 000 IDPs have returned home, an estimated 41 000 refugees from CAR are still living in Chad."(FAO, 28 February 2005)

"During the year, there continued to be large numbers of persons who were internally displaced by the 2003 coup and the continuing instability. By June, between 230,000 and 300,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) remained in the country, although there were reports that many IDPs were returning to their homes in the second half of the year."(US Department of State, 28 February 2005)

"There are currently around 200,000 displaced persons in the Central African Republic and almost 30,000 Central African refugees in Goré (Chad) following the events of 15 March 2003. In turn, the Central African Republic is providing refuge to almost 46,000 people of Sudanese, Chadian, Congolese (from the Democratic Republic of the Congo), Rwandan and Burundian origin. From 25 to 27 August 2004, a joint mission of the Central African Republic and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) travelled to Kinshasa to sign a S/2004/1012 tripartite agreement prior to the repatriation of refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo living in the Central African Republic. The repatriation operation began in October 2004 and is ongoing."(UNSC, 23 December 2004)

"It was reported that there are currently 2.2 million vulnerable people who do not have access to food or health supplies and 200,000 IDPs. The crisis has various implications in the areas of health (risk of epidemic outbreaks), insecurity ("coupeurs de route" phenomenon), human rights violations and ethnic tensions, poor infrastructure impeding humanitarian assistance, fragile regional environment with the current or potential crises in neighbouring countries: DRC, Congo-Brazzaville, Sudan and Chad."(UNOCHA, 18 June 2004)

"The armed conflict has caused many Central Africans in rural areas to abandon their homes and farms to camp out in forested areas or flee to neighboring Chad. Many missed their planting seasons. An estimated 230,000 to 300,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) remain in the country and 42,000 others fled to north to Chad as refugees. Displaced people are slowly returning to their homes but are prevented from working in their farms in many areas because of insecurity. One aid worker told RI, "Many of the donor agencies that used to support development have stopped, thus blocking agriculture and education programs for the people." (Refugee International, 21 May 2004)

"During the military activities of 2002-2003, large sections of the rural population sought refuge from urban centres and villages in favour of safe haven in the forests. In addition, some 42,000 have become refugees in Chad. The UNCT and NGOs estimate that there were, (at the time of the 2002-3 crisis), some 200,000 internally displaced persons. Over the past twelve months there has been a steady return to places of origin and today one can generally state that there are no IDPs in CAR, (although small pockets still reportedly exist due to a lack of clothing and a sense of shame about returning to villages located along the roads."(UN OCHA, p 11, 10 March 2004)

"Ouham and Ouham Pende have about 650,000 people, half of whom are still in hiding after being displaced by six months of fighting between rebels and government troops, Colombo said.

He said that the presence of the COOPI medical team in Ouham might encourage internally displaced people (IDPS) to return home.

'They are not far from their villages where they come in the morning or in the evening to visit their homes before returning to the bush,' he said.

Most of the October 2002-March 2003 fighting took place in Ouham and Ouham Pende provinces between fighters loyal to Francois Bozize, a former CAR army chief of staff, and government troops of President Ange-Felix Patasse. Hundreds of residents fled the region then, and many are reported to be hesitant to return as insecurity prevails. The fighting ended when Bozize ousted Patasse in a coup on 15 March." (UN OCHA, 19 May 2003)

Towns in Ouham and Ouham Pende were only inhabited by 30 percent to 50 percent of their pre-war populations (April 2003)

- Heavy fighting in areas bordering Chad in February 2003 caused massive displacements
- 4/5 of a population of 200,000 estimated to have fled the occupied towns
- 231,000 people had left their homes as a result of the war in the CAR
- About 105,000 of them had fled from the former rebel zones in the north to former government-held areas in the south
- More than 100,000 were still hiding in the bush in the north as of March 2003

" An employee of the Italian NGO Cooperazione Internazionale, Emerico Colombo, has toured the northern provinces of Ouham and Ouham Pende, the worst affected during the war. He told IRIN on Friday that many villages had been partially or wholly burnt. Currently, he said, towns in both provinces were only inhabited by 30 percent to 50 percent of their pre-war populations. Many other town residents, fearful of roaming armed gangs, have built new homes on their farms.

'The few who are still in villages run to the bush when they see a vehicle,' he said."(IRIN, 22 April 2003)

" La population de l'ouham est estimée à 195.323 habitants dont la plupart est concentrée dans les grands centres urbains de Bossangoa (30.000 habitants), Bouca (19.000 habitants), Batangafo (20.000 habitants) qui a servi de bases arrières aux rebelles pendant leur lutte pour la « libération du pays ». L'occupation de ces centres urbains par les hommes armés, leur présence dans les grands villages et les affrontements qui ont suivi (surtout ceux de février mars 2003), ont provoqué des déplacements massifs de populations dans les brousses, les champs et autres villes environnantes du Tchad, de la capitale Bangui, etc. On estime à plus de 4/5 les populations qui se sont retrouvées, à un moment ou l'autre déplacées, toutes catégories confondues (autorités administratives, fonctionnaires, paysans, jeunes, femmes, etc.)"(UNICEF et al, 12 May 2003)

" WFP reported on 12 March that some 231,000 people had left their homes as a result of the war in the CAR. About 105,000 of them had fled from the former rebel zones in the north to former government-held areas in the south; 26,000 were refugees in southern Chad, and more than 100,000 were still hiding in the bush in the north." (IRIN, 24 March 2003)

The Central African Republic less populated than estimated (March 2004)

- Estimated 3,1 million people in the whole country as of December 2003
- Estimates revised downwards from 3,8 million people
- More than 4000 registration officials conducted the census

"Un recensement de la population a été effectué en novembre et décembre 2003 par plus de 4 000 enquêteurs. Outre le nombre d'habitants, les résultats des enquêtes permettront de connaître un certain nombre d'éléments sur les aspects sociaux de la population de Centrafrique : langue parlée, alphabétisation, et indicateurs de santé (taux de natalité, de mortalité et de mortalité infantile) et mesurer l'incidence des conflits des dernières années sur les déplacements de populations. Les données recueillies sont en cours de consolidation.

Le nombre estimatif d'habitants, 3,1 millions, est inférieur aux estimations les plus récentes qui donnaient une population de 3,7 à 3,8 millions d'habitants.

La Centrafrique, qui figure aux tout derniers rangs du classement mondial des pays sur la base de l'indice de développement humain du Pnud, est l'un des pays d'Afrique les plus fortement affectés par le VIH/Sida, avec un taux de prévalence au sein de la population sexuellement active de plus de 20% et un accès aux soins très réduit." (GoF, 31 March 2004)

PATTERNS OF DISPLACEMENT

Overview

Recent displacements appear to be of longer term nature (Special report, 2007)

During past armed conflicts and political violence, internal displacement in the CAR was a temporary phenomenon. However, more recent displacements appear to be of a longer-term nature due to the recurrence of violence in the area of origin of the displaced.

There are two types of conflict-induced displacement. There is a category of people who have fled to Bangui and regional towns such as Bokaranga, Kabo and Bria, where they have sought refuge with friends, families and host communities. However, the majority of the displaced have fled far from the main roads to the bush and are living a few kilometres away from their villages near their fields, many of them traumatised and in fear of attack, mainly by the CAR security forces.

Many of the displaced are located in isolated settlements. They are camping in temporary huts or under the open sky, without protection and exposed to diseases. They may come back to their village to retrieve water when security allows such movement. In the bush, there are reportedly civilians still internally displaced as a result of the conflicts of 2002 and 2003.

General

Civilians from around Wandago flee to the bush or neighbouring towns (October 2006)

IRIN, 9 October 2006

"Thousands of people have fled their homes around the town of Wandago in northern Central African Republic over the past three weeks after an outbreak of fighting between government troops and rebels, witnesses said.

Humanitarian officials in Bangui said they had reports of people fleeing the conflict, but aid workers were not immediately able to confirm the number of people involved.

Jacques Gonemandji, a motorist who arrived in Bangui from Kaga-Bandoro, a town near Wandago, said on Saturday thousands of people had run into the bush or sought refuge in neighbouring towns.

"There are thousands of them who left their villages to avoid being caught by fighting between armed bandits and the regular army in the region," he said.

Some villagers who could not move southwards had fled to neighbouring Chad, he added.

Fighting erupted afresh after the army sought to flush out rebels who have been operating in the area since the end of July.

Army spokesman Lt. Benjamin Banga-Bekoue said late on Sunday the army was battling "armed bandits" and that a junior army officer had been killed in a rebel ambush on Friday. An army sergeant was killed in another ambush earlier last week, he added.

The latest attacks on the army appear to confirm widespread speculation that the rebel group Armée Populaire pour la Restauration de la République et de la démocratie (APRD) is active in the northwest."

Displacements can last only some hours (May 2005)

- There are no recent reports on numbers and conditions for the internally displaced people in the Central African Republic. However, based on telephone interviews with field workers, e-mails and field mission reports, certain conclusions can be drawn; There are as of May 2005 no IDP camps in the country, though families or smaller groups of people flee insecurity in rural areas were bandits and former supporters of the national leader Bozizé roam in the absence of state structures. The displacements are often short-term, with people hiding only for some hours in the bush, while the bandits eat and steal their belongings. Relatively large numbers of people are also thought to have fled more permanently to the major cities and mixed with the general population. (The Global IDP Project, 2 May 2005)

"Although the armed conflict was relatively short and low intensity, the population was exposed to numerous exactions (hold-ups, rape and summary executions) and looting on both sides of the front line. State services were badly hit, in particular hospitals, health centres, public administration buildings, businesses and religious missions. Public servants and staff abandoned their work places and the local population found refuge for several weeks in the bush, taking with them their most essential items. Despite the long distances between their villages and temporary refuges, these to-and-fro movements have not really stopped. Commerce and subsistence trading slowly developed between the villages and those living in the bush." (ICRC, 8 July 2003)

"In the past five months,[from May 2003] many persons were forced to flee from acts of violence perpetrated by armed groups and the fighting raging on the various fronts. Many of them found refuge with relatives, while others took to the bush, many sought security in the town, and most recently, there were numerous population displacements along the Northern borders of the country following various offensives and counter-offensives by the warring factions. About 25,000 persons (including 10,000 in the camp set up by the HCR at Gore, 5,000 at Sarh and about 10,000 in border villages) migrated to Chad. Some of them identified as Chadians decided to return to their country because of the recent events. As for those who had long lost contact with their villages of origin or their families, UNHCR has, for all practical purposes considered them as CAR refugees and is providing them with assistance to that effect.

The most disturbing cases, however, are the thousands of displaced persons in the bushes and the Central Africans who have settled at the border with Chad and who still find themselves in a more precarious situation because of tensions between Chadians and Central Africans in these border regions. An evaluation mission will be conducted to better appraise and analyse the phenomenon of displacement across the country during the conflict, so as to seek proper solutions."(UN OCHA, 8 May 2003)

"[...] However, the CAR Red Cross has continued to register new IDPs who want to be assisted, after many days in the bush.

'On Thursday we registered 19 people from Bossangoa [305 km northwest of Bangui] and among them there were a baby aged five months and four children aged between five years and 15 years,' Patrice Yazenga, the CAR Red Cross secretary-general, told IRIN on 1 February.

Between 35 and 50 IDPs were reaching Bangui every day, he added, but many of them failed to register because they did not believe they would get help. He said children and the elderly had started displaying signs of malnutrition. 'These people ask for food, blankets, cooking pots, clothes, shoes and other household stuffs,' he said. Some IDPs were being helped by their relatives and others by religious communities, he added.

A Red Cross census carried out in December 2002 in two of Bangui's eight suburbs showed there were about 2,300 IDPs.

People in the centre and north of the country have been fleeing into the bush, making for Bangui, or southern Chad, in fear of Bozize's armed followers and possible government army counterattacks. The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Bangui reported in January that about 10,000 people, including at least 1,300 CAR nationals, had fled to southern Chad." (IRIN, 3 February 2003)

Approximately 80,000 fled during and following the May [2001] coup attempt, mostly to the forests and small village areas southwest of Bangui

- Approximately 50,000 were displaced internally
- By mid-July approximately 10,000 to 40,000 persons had returned to their homes
- Smaller numbers continued to flee because of continued targeting of the Yakoma population by the Government
- Most fled to the outskirts of the capital, where they sought shelter in local homes and the surrounding forest
- Approximately 25,000 crossed the Oubangui River into northwest Congo-Kinshasa
- As many as half of the uprooted population returned home by July 2001
- Others trickled home later in the year, often finding their houses looted and destroyed
- Most of those who remained refugees or internally displaced at year's end were ethnic Yakoma who feared retribution

"Approximately 80,000 citizens, including half of the country's ethnic Yakoma population, fled during and following the May [2001] coup attempt, mostly to the forests and small village areas southwest of Bangui. Approximately 50,000 were displaced internally; an estimated 24,000 fled to the DRC border town of Zongo, and approximately 2,000 fled to the Republic of Congo. By mid-July approximately 10,000 to 40,000 persons had returned to their homes; however, smaller numbers continued to flee because of continued targeting of the Yakoma population by the Government" (U.S. State Department, 4 March 2002)

"Approximately 70,000 residents of Bangui fled their homes during the coup attempt [By former president General Andre Kolingba in May 2001] and the subsequent retaliations by government supporters.

Most fled to the outskirts of the capital, where they sought shelter in local homes and the surrounding forest. Approximately 25,000 crossed the Oubangui River into northwest Congo-Kinshasa, including hundreds of armed participants in the coup attempt. About 2,000 refugees went to Congo-Brazzaville.

Central African Republic authorities officially closed their border with Congo-Kinshasa and deployed military patrols along the Oubangui River in an effort to halt cross-border traffic, preventing many citizens of Central African Republic from bringing food to relatives who had fled Bangui's violence.

Many displaced families were exposed to heavy rains before finding shelter. Residents of nearby towns and neighborhoods struggled to supply food, drinking water, and medicines to displaced persons in their midst.

As many as half of the uprooted population returned home by July, while others trickled home later in the year, often finding their houses looted and destroyed. Most of those who remained refugees or internally displaced at year's end were ethnic Yakoma who feared retribution." (US Committee for Refugees, 1 January 2002)

PHYSICAL SECURITY & FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

Overview

Civilians in urgent need of protection (Special report, 2007)

The absence of state institutions in rural areas and the pervasive nature of the conflict make it hard to find physical protection and stability, especially in remote areas where most IDPs are located. Poor infrastructure and lack of confidence in state institutions and mismanagement of funds by successive governments are at the root of the widespread insecurity that has plunged populations into acute vulnerability.

Since the 2002/2003 armed conflict that brought Bozizé to power, both UN and human rights organisations have reported continuing human rights and humanitarian law violations committed by different parties with total impunity. Bemba's Congolese forces, which helped Patassé repel Bozizé's attacks in 2002, reportedly committed abuses against civilians. Similarly, Central African and Chadian soldiers who subsequently helped overthrow Patassé in March 2003 were apparently not paid what they were promised for their support to the coup d'état and engaged in banditry, kidnappings, killings and looting, both inside the country and in neighbouring Cameroon. Human rights violations such as summary executions have also been committed by the security forces with the implicit approval of the 2003-2005 transitional government.

The overall human rights situation has further deteriorated since the beginning of 2006. Abuses documented include arbitrary arrests and detention, summary executions, torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, violation of time limits on police custody, restriction of the freedom of movement, forced recruitment, sexual violence and looting of private property. UN SG report, 27 June 2006, para.18; UN OCHA, 11 May 2006; UN OCHA, November 2006, p.10. According to the *Fédération Internationale des Droits de l'Homme*, government security forces routinely subject civilians to extortion, killings, robbery and physical attack. Rebel armed groups are similarly guilty of extortion and harassment. The breakdown of the judicial system and its incapacity to carry out effective investigations and prosecutions have exacerbated the problem of impunity that exists across the country.

There is a pattern of rebel groups occupying a village and looting the possessions of inhabitants. This triggers the intervention of the army, mainly the Presidential Guard, which usually enters the village a few days later, pillaging what has been left by the rebels, burning down houses, and harassing the inhabitants who the army accuses of supporting the rebels.

In January 2006, the rebels attacked a military base in Paoua; in reprisal, the army occupied the three districts of Nana Barya, Babessar and Mia Pende, burnt down houses and killed civilians, sending thousands of others fleeing into the bush. The towns and areas around Kabo, Markounda, Paoua and Kaga Bandoro experienced a similar scenario.

At the beginning of October 2006 some 27 villages were attacked and burnt by the Presidential Guard. Over the past year, more than 100 villages have reportedly been burnt down by different parties to the conflict. Previously, in December 2005, more than 900 homes were burnt in about ten villages in the Markounda area, while some villages were completely destroyed.

Some officials recognise that the behaviour of the army is one of the causes of displacement. Like the rebels and the bandits, the army relies on the civilian population to feed itself. The army

is understaffed, and has irregular pay, limited logistics and training, and poor discipline. With roughly 4,500 troops, the CAR army needs restructuring. Most of the soldiers are over-age. Enrolment in the army is often based on ethnic or regional loyalties, making it more regional than national. There is a need to monitor the role of the army in committing serious human rights violations leading to the displacement of civilians, and to urge the government to stop assaults by the army on the civilian population, including IDPs, in the conflict zone, and ensure their physical protection.

In a decision of 11 April 2006, the highest criminal court (*Cour de Cassation*) of the CAR has recognised the incapacity of the CAR justice system to carry out effective investigations and prosecutions for the most serious crimes committed in the country, and that the International Criminal Court is the only means to prevent impunity.

Physical security

Civilians deliberately targeted by the rebels and CAR security forces (October 2006)

UNHCR, October 2006, p.5

“While the northern provinces of the Central African Republic have for some time experienced increased levels of insecurity due to highway bandits (*coupeurs de route*), an armed rebellion has now emerged as well, thereby further increasing the protection needs of the civilian population. Civilians have to bear the threefold burden of general criminal activities, irregular armed groups and army reprisals, as the security forces often suspect the population of supporting the rebels. For example, more than 900 homes have been reported burnt to the ground in about ten villages close to the Chadian border, with some of the villages being completely destroyed during reprisals by armed forces. Furthermore, residents in that area are reportedly subjected to a variety of human rights abuses, including arbitrary arrests, summary executions, forced recruitment, sexual violence and looting of private property.”

OCHA, 18 July 2006, p.2

« La situation sécuritaire du pays, déjà précaire en 2005, s'est aggravée depuis le début de l'année 2006, en particulier dans le Nord-Ouest. Des attaques fréquentes ont lieu contre la population civile, perpétrées par des groupes souvent non identifiés (bandits ou rebelles). A ces attaques s'ajoutent les conflits entre ces mêmes groupes et l'armée. Cette situation a provoqué non seulement une aggravation de la crise humanitaire et des déplacements, mais a aussi rendu plus difficile l'accès aux zones les plus affectées par les acteurs humanitaires. Certains d'entre eux, notamment des missionnaires, ont même été attaqués par des groupes armés. Deux médecins en mission pour un projet lié à l'Organisation Mondiale de la Santé (OMS), qui voyageaient dans un véhicule portant le logo du Fonds des Nations Unies pour l'Enfance (UNICEF), ont été tués. »

Deteriorating human rights situation (2006)

- Civilians subject to assault by different parties to the conflict
- Reports of arbitrary or summary execution, abuses and killing
- Compelling evidence of the extent of impunity

FIDH, 12 October 2006

“Since the end of 2005, a conflict reignited in the North of the country. In the North-western part of the country, the Central African armed forces are fighting the rebel army, l’armée populaire pour la restauration de la République, which is supported by former President Patassé, who was overthrown by a coup in 2003 and, in the North-east, by Central African and Chadian rebels, with some support from Sudan and the alleged criminals of the 2003 conflict.

There is compelling evidence of the extent of impunity in CAR and the guilty silence of the international community.

The civilian population is the main victim of this new cycle of violence, subjected to continuous assault by the belligerents, rebels and loyalists. This report condemns the double suffering of the victims of the conflicts in CAR, in particular the victims of rape systematically used as a weapon of war against women, men and children in the 2002/2003 conflict, and continues to be perpetrated. These victims of violent attacks on their physical and psychological integrity, often carrying HIV, suffer from stigmatisation within the Central African society and from the general indifference to their extreme physical, social and economic distress.

Abandoned by the CAR justice system, these victims nonetheless have had the courage to organise themselves and their hope now lies in international justice. But the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, having been informed by FIDH in 2003, and having received a referral from the Central African government at the end of 2004, has still failed to respond. FIDH reiterates its appeal to the ICC Prosecutor to immediately open an investigation on CAR, in order to fulfil the mandate of repression and prevention of the ICC.”

For more information on war crimes in Central African Republic see the [FIDH report of its most recent international investigative mission in the Central African Republic \(CAR\) in Bangui from 10 to 17 June 2006](#).

UN SG report, 27 June 2006, p.4

“18. The overall human rights situation has clearly deteriorated since the beginning of the year. There have been many abuses and violations of the right to life. In particular, there have been many reports of arbitrary or summary execution; torture; cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment; arbitrary arrest and detention; violation of time limits on police custody; and restriction of the freedom of movement. The execution of Staff Sergeant Sanzé early in the year by members of the Presidential Guard; the assassination of the mayor of Bossangoa, for which rebels have claimed responsibility; the killing of the mayor of the municipality of Koron-Mpoko and his son by unidentified armed individuals; and the murder of two local physicians on official mission in the northern part of the country are tragic examples of the violations perpetrated in the Central African Republic.”

Human rights abuses by government security forces (March 2005)

- Presidential guard and Central Office for Suppression of Banditry accused of serious human rights violations

" La Section des droits de l’Homme a été informée des cas d’atteinte au droit à la vie imputables aux forces de défense et de sécurité et notamment, de la Garde présidentielle, de l’Office Centrale de Répression du Banditisme (OCRB). En outre, elle a reçu des informations et des dénonciations concernant des atteintes à la liberté d’aller et venir, de traitements cruels, inhumains, humiliants et dégradants.

Bien que la République centrafricaine ait signé et ratifié des instruments juridiques internationaux, des cas d’exécution sommaires, d’atteinte à la liberté d’aller et venir sont quotidiennement commises et signalés tant aux autorités qu’à la section des droits de l’homme. Ainsi, selon des

témoignages concordants, des hommes armés ont abattu publiquement le 13 novembre, le Président de la Délégation Spéciale de la commune d'élevage de Niem-Yéloa ainsi que ses deux fils, par des hommes armés après leur avoir extorqué de l'argent.

Le crime de braquage est devenu le crime standard pour justifier la garde à vue prolongée des nombreux détenus dans les geôles de l'OCRB. Ces derniers temps, les prétendus braqueurs sont automatiquement abattus au champ de tir et les corps remis aux familles qui n'osent pas se plaindre, craignant les représailles. Ces faits sont portés régulièrement à la connaissance des autorités. Cependant, les méthodes de travail des agents de ce service semblent ne pas émouvoir les autorités de tutelle.

Il s'agit d'actes contraires aux dispositions pertinentes de l'article 3 du Pacte international relatif aux droits civils et politiques auquel le pays a librement souscrit."(UNOHCHR, 31 March 2005)

"La situation générale des droits de l'Homme demeure un sujet de grave préoccupation. L'insécurité doublée de graves dysfonctionnements du système judiciaire constitue un facteur de systématisation et de généralisation des violations des droits humains.

La Section des Droits de l'Homme a reçu de nombreux témoignages et informations faisant état des cas de violations du droit à la vie, d'exécutions sommaires et extrajudiciaires, de traitements cruels inhumains, ou dégradants, de justice populaire, d'arrestations arbitraires et/ou illégales et à la liberté de la presse. Ces cas ont été dénoncés par les organisations locales de défense des droits de l'Homme, principalement la Ligue Centrafricaine des Droits de l'Homme (LCDH)." (UNOHCHR, 21 September 2004)

Former militia supporters of the national leader cause insecurity (March 2005)

- Volatile security situation in two of the conflict ridden prefectures (March 2005)
- Bandits harass vehicles, ransack villages and loot
- Lack of security most evident in rural areas
- Militias that supported the coup d'etat on 15 March 2003 demonstrated to be paid

"La sécurité dans les deux préfectures l'Ouham et la Nana-Membéré est en permanence remise en cause par des attaques armées contre les populations civiles." (UNOHCHR, 31 March 2005)

"The Central African authorities continue to be concerned about controlling the security situation. During the period under review, the lack of security has been most evident in the provinces, particularly in rural areas, where civilian populations are vulnerable to attacks by persons engaged in road-blocking, livestock thieves and uncontrollable elements, in particular the "former liberators" who gave military assistance to General Bozizé during the coup d'état of 15 March 2003.

The most recent action carried out by the "former liberators", in April 2004, severely tested the regime. The demonstrators demanded the "bonuses promised" in return for their support of the rebellion that had led to the overthrow of the regime on 15 March 2003. In exchange for these "bonuses" and laissez-passer to allow them to travel to their places of origin, the former liberators would re-enter civilian life and resume their former activities. During their demonstration, they set up barricades along the highway at the northern exit of Bangui. The demonstration gave rise to violent confrontations with the regular forces, supported by Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) forces, which claimed 10 lives and some 15 wounded."(UN SC, 16 June 2004)

" There has been increasing activity by growing numbers of armed bandits. These groups, (some of them with access to sophisticated communications means), harass vehicles travelling along road axes (the traditional activity of the "coupeur de routes"), but also regularly ransack villages and the crops in the fields. Both issues need to be tackled swiftly to avert a humanitarian disaster that may result in: (i) renewed and larger displacement of populations potentially towards urban centres in the interior (themselves not much safer or better equipped and already under stress) and ultimately, across national borders and/or towards Bangui; (ii) increased occurrence of epidemics – particularly meningitis and measles – and; (iii) further deterioration in food security and the overall well-being of populations amongst whom signs of potentially catastrophic malnutrition already exist." (UN OCHA, p. 8, 10 March 2004)

SUBSISTENCE NEEDS

General

A hidden humanitarian crisis (Special report, 2007)

Most IDPs have sought refuge in the wilderness not far from their fields and are living in dire conditions. The seriousness of their situation is hard to grasp given the endemic poverty and under-development of the whole country, caused in part by the protracted socio-political and military crises and subsequent collapse of even basic services. The CAR has a population of about 3.9 million, with 532,000 living in the capital Bangui, and is one of the poorest countries in Africa. Some 73 per cent of the population live below the poverty line of an income of one dollar per day. Life expectancy at birth which stood at 49 in 1988 has slid to 39 as of 2005. According to the UNDP development index 2006, the CAR is ranked 172 out of 177 countries. It is currently estimated that one fourth of the whole population is affected by the ongoing conflict in the north.

The humanitarian conditions of the displaced are generally worse than that of the general population, as they often are isolated from areas where services are provided and are living where there are no civilian authorities. UN SG report, 27 June 2006, para.11 Additionally, internal displacement-affected areas are those where public infrastructures and private property, including dwellings and livestock have been stolen or destroyed.

While the emergency needs of IDPs in the wake of large displacement are being fairly well addressed in other countries as they are often easily identifiable in camps or centres, the humanitarian situation of the vast majority of IDPs scattered in isolated settlements in the bush in the CAR has never been properly addressed. Despite a slight increase in 2006 of humanitarian activity in some of the most affected areas of the north-west, the displaced are still in urgent need of emergency assistance. There are considerable gaps mainly in the areas of education, shelter, health and food.

Food

IDPs scatered in the bush surviving on wild leaves (Special report, 2007)

IDPs scattered in the bush are in many cases surviving on wild leaves, fruit and roots in the absence of properly nutritious food; food distributions do not cover the overall needs. Furthermore, displacement has rendered food provision unstable, with a consequent degradation of nutritional standards. According to a nutritional investigation of 2005 carried out by UNICEF, malnutrition has reached alarming levels, in particular among children under five in most conflict-affected zones. At least 30 per cent reportedly suffer from chronic malnutrition, and four per cent from severe malnutrition. Before COOPI in partnership with Caritas, the national Red Cross Society and local actors started distributing food delivered by the UN World Food Programme in mid-2006, more than 70,000 people – mostly IDPs – were at risk of starvation around the towns of Markounda and Paoua.

Instability and insecurity reduced crop production, rendered agricultural practices almost impossible for IDPs and for other people affected by the conflict. Entire harvesting seasons were lost in the bread basket regions of the north-west for up to four consecutive years (prefectures of Ouham-Pendé, Ouham, Nana-Gribizi, Nana-Mambéré and Kémo) and prices for staple food have risen sharply, causing more hardship for most people. Many harvested crops, food and seed stocks were looted or set on fire.

Afraid to move about, IDPs and people affected by the conflict have reduced their everyday life activities. Consequently, their temporary plantations produce limited quantities. Recent attacks have targeted food supplies, just a few weeks after the harvest, leaving villagers with almost nothing on which to survive until they can harvest again, late in 2007.

Unless agricultural production is revitalised, and sufficient food aid is also provided, lack of food can lead to disastrous consequences for the health and survival of the displaced.

Contradicting information on the food situation (March 2005)

- The food output in 2005 is expected to recover somewhat compared to last year
- Reports of acute malnutrition in some areas, but food appears readily available in markets
- Food grain deficit of 71% of total production in the provinces of Nana Gribizi, Kemo, Ouham and Ouham-Pende (2004)
- Animals were stolen or consumed during the crisis
- Low output of the agriculture sector have had dire consequences for children and women
- More than 50% of households had lost their already meager sources of income

"Harvesting of the 2004 cereal crops is complete. The output is expected to recover somewhat, reflecting an improved security situation relative to the situation in 2003 and increased plantings following agricultural inputs distribution with assistance of FAO in the localities which were adversely affected by the 2003 rebellion."(FAO, 28 February 2005)

"According to some reports, acute malnutrition has reached 14 percent in some areas. Yet the head of the UN Children's Fund health-and-nutrient programme, Eli Ramamonjisoa, told IRIN that malnutrition was currently "not a major problem in the country". Food appeared to be readily available in markets that IRIN visited this month in Bangui and towns and villages in the northwest.

A humanitarian specialist for the UN Development Programme (UNDP), Fabrice Boussalem, said some aid workers in the CAR are more concerned with crisis prevention."

"I don't think there is really a humanitarian crisis here yet," he told IRIN. "But indicators show that the humanitarian situation is deteriorating."

Boussalem also said aid workers "have no idea what is going on in 95 percent of the CAR". Only a handful of NGOs and UN agencies are operating in country, which is larger than France."(IRIN, 18 March 2005)

"The pillaging and insecurity that followed the events of October 2002-March 2003 caused major disruption of economic and agricultural activity. In November 2003, FAO and WFP undertook a joint mission in areas that had been most affected to evaluate the food security situation. Preliminary results found a food grain deficit of 71% of total production in the provinces of Nana

Gribizi, Kemo, Ouham and Ouham-Pende, thereby confirming the vulnerability of the rural population and the precariousness of the food situation in the areas visited. Further analysis resulted in the production of a map of food insecurity vulnerability in the CAR (see below).

Populations robbed of their seed stocks and tools are experiencing the greatest difficulties in re-establishing their means of production. The livestock sector was also seriously affected, as animals were either stolen or consumed during the crisis.

The seed production system put in place by the Institut Centrafricain de Recherches Agronomiques (ICRA) during the 1990s under the auspices of the World Bank was totally destroyed during conflicts. Farmers were forced to abandon their activities due to insecurity.

In Bangui as well as in the provinces, much of the farming and livestock regions and infrastructure was destroyed. Small livestock (goats, sheep, pigs, poultry) were the hardest hit by the successive crises, to such a degree that the CAR now imports poultry products from neighboring countries, South Africa and Europe. Livestock activity is concentrated around Bangui and the Mbaiki-Bossemele and Damara axis. People living in the former red zone have no access to poultry products.

The low output of the agriculture sector and the continued limited means of production, especially in the conflict zones, have had dire consequences for the most vulnerable populations, particularly children and women.

WFP's Vulnerability Assessment Mapping (VAM) from March to May 2004 in the targeted provinces found a continued deterioration of the food security situation, as more than 50% of households had lost their already meager sources of income."(UNOCHA, 11 November 2004, p. 6)

Health

Appalling absence of viable medical centers and personnel in IDPs-affected areas (Special report, 2007)

The absence of viable medical centres and medical personnel in most conflict-affected northern regions, not to mention remote areas of the bush where most IDPs are located, is appalling. Medical infrastructures were destroyed during the various politico-military crises. Until 2000, some organisations including the German Agency for Technical Cooperation/German Development Bank and UNICEF were instrumental in the establishment of facilities throughout the northern regions. But most of these facilities have since been damaged during the conflicts. Limited information is available on the current level of access to such facilities, but very few actors are operational in the sector.

The deterioration of medical facilities shows the precariousness of IDPs' health situation. The displaced are living in the bush with no access to drinkable water and sanitation facilities. They are exposed to diseases such as diarrhoea and malaria which are important in flood-prone areas of the north especially between the months of May and October every year. Moreover, since they are scared of moving about, IDPs have little access to health structures to get treated. Some displaced people hiding from government forces are reported to have died from wounds they had sustained during attacks, from snake bites and from illnesses for which they could not access medical care in the bush. IDMC/NRC, interviews CAR, October 2006; AI, 30 November 2006. Women and children are particularly affected. While nationwide less than 50 per cent of children are vaccinated against transmissible diseases, in conflict- affected areas this rate is much lower.

In terms of response, taking advantage of food distribution to IDPs, NGOs such as Italy's Cooperazione Internazionale (COOPI) have been providing some medical care to the displaced. The ICRC and MSF are similarly providing medical care through mobile clinics. However, the current level of response remains below the overall needs.

There is a need for supporting the local health structures in monitoring and addressing epidemics. Preventive measures should be taken against the high risk of epidemic, especially for IDPs scattered in different isolated settlements in the bush.

The last conflict aggravated an already precarious health situation (December 2004)

- 28% acute and 12% severe malnutrition among children from 6-56 months in war affected districts
- More than 2.2 million people in the eastern and northern regions were cut off from humanitarian assistance
- Health workers have fled
- Poor epidemiological conditions and malnutrition in the countryside

"Nutrition/Health: a comprehensive survey was undertaken by WFP in September (covering 13 prefectures out of 16). Results indicate 28% acute and 12% severe malnutrition among children from 6-56 months - well above emergency levels.

The health system has collapsed, and is unable to detect, prevent or respond to epidemic outbreaks. At the same time, the Government imposes a rigid cost-recovery programme which limits access to the few services that do exist. There is 15% prevalence of HIV/AIDS. Outbreaks of polio continue in CAR, with 27 cases being reported in the western province of Mambere Kadei in October. A 3-day nationwide Government anti-polio immunisation campaign began on 22 November, targeting children under 5."(UNOCHA, 8 December 2004)

"Humanitarian conditions in the CAR are difficult to characterize. It is a complex emergency that includes chronic epidemiological problems, malnutrition, instability and displacement. During the fighting more than 2.2 million people in the eastern and northern regions were cut off from humanitarian assistance. [...]

People in the northwest have been subjected to diseases because there are no health workers to provide services as many of them fled the area during the rebellion. Children remain at great risk of communicable and other diseases. Measles and several diarrhea outbreaks were reported in four areas in the north in November of 2003." (Refugees International, 22 May 2004)

Interview with Ramiro Lopes Da Silva, OCHA Special Humanitarian Adviser for CAR:

"Q: How real is the threat of famine in the northwest?"

A: The term "famine" has a very clear definition. The CAR is not facing a situation of famine. However, it is clear that populations have less access to food. There is also malnutrition, which obviously worsens every day. The aim of our mission [humanitarian mission to the north-east in February-March 2004] is to try and respond to that situation.

Q: The northwest is considered the country's granary. However, peasants have lost two planting seasons for lack of seeds and have not been able to sell their cotton harvests, which could have improved their situation. What would you recommend in that respect?

A: That is not part of my current mission, which is finding humanitarian responses. Other solutions aimed at reviving the country's agriculture and economy should be handled by the government with the support of its development partners and UN agencies in the country.

Q: Only two NGOs (Spanish charity Medicos Sin Fronteras and Italian Cooperazione Internazionale) are active on the ground in the northwest, where epidemics such as measles, meningitis, tropical ulcers and polio are reported. Would your mission encourage the coming of more medical charities?

A: The CAR humanitarian situation can be characterised in two ways: the epidemiological aspect and malnutrition. For the epidemiological aspect, we are going to mobilise funds for the UN World Health Organization so that it can urgently carry out an epidemiological control drive nationwide. We will emphasise this while talking to donors." (IRIN, 8 March 2004)

"As the hostilities ended, inter-agency assessment missions in the field allowed evaluations of the degree of damage caused by the war and looting. It was found that the situation in combat zones was unbearable: infrastructure and health care equipment had been destroyed, resulting in a complete lack of medicine, including complete loss of vaccines due to disruptions to the cold chain.

It should also be noted that the public health system was in chronic crisis even before the last conflict (October 25, 2002 to March 15, 2003), illustrated by the marked deterioration of the principal health indicators, currently among the lowest in the world. The conflict has aggravated this dramatic situation. " (UNOCHA p 8, 18 November 2003)

Precarious humanitarian situation (December 2004)

- Lack of access to health, drinking water and education
- Access for humanitarian actors is severely limited due to bad road conditions and insecurity
- Only 1/3 of the health infrastructure in the affected districts have been repaired
- Reports of frequent epidemics

"In the humanitarian sphere, the situation remains precarious, marked by the people's lack of access to basic health care, drinking water, education and food self-sufficiency, and by violence and extortion linked to residual crime. The number of humanitarian organizations, which is already low, is constantly falling, with the exception of agencies of the United Nations system. As a result, the capacity to take action is becoming more limited, even as people's level of vulnerability grows. It remains difficult for humanitarian organizations to reach vulnerable population groups, and in some areas it is even impossible. This difficulty is due to the poor state of road infrastructures and to the insecurity that prevails in the interior of the country." (UNSC, 23 December 2004)

"L'infrastructure sanitaire est insuffisante – 1 centre de santé pour 6 000 habitants, 1 lit pour 1 100 habitants – et obsolète ou en grande partie détruite, y compris en ce qui concerne la chaîne du froid. Seulement un tiers des infrastructures dans les zones les plus touchées ont été réhabilitées. En termes de ressources humaines, les indicateurs sont aussi négatifs

– 1 médecin pour 6 000 habitants et 1 infirmier pour 17 000 habitants), avec une distribution géographique inégale.

D'autre part, seulement 30 pour cent de la population ont accès à de l'eau potable. • Le système de surveillance ne fonctionne pas, et seulement 38 pour cent des centres de santé envoient un rapport régulièrement. Les épidémies sont fréquentes: en 2004, Il y a eu des épidémies de méningite, de poliomyélite (dont la transmission par le virus sauvage avait cessé depuis 2000), de rougeole et de shigellas."(WHO, 31 December 2004)

Health facilities looted in Ouham, Ouham Pendé and Ombella M'Poko (July 2003)

- Hospitals and health centres looted for sanitation materials, medicaments and furniture
- Reduced or complete absence of extended vaccination programmes
- Half of medical staff in place
- Health personell lack qualifications
- In spite of COOPI's assistance, sanitation facilities operate below the pre-conflict level
- The health conditions are specially alarming for mothers and children
- Small pox reported in all health facilities visited
- 70 dead children reported of the disease in the sous préfecture of Nana - Bakassa

"Dans ce domaine on déplore également le pillage des matériels, équipements sanitaires, médicaments et consommables médicaux, mobiliers de bureau dans toutes les formations sanitaires visitées (hôpitaux, centres et postes de santé)

Les activités PEV ne se pratiquent pas d'une manière générale ; (i) 100 % des unités PEV de l'Ouham et (ii) 60 % des unités de l'Ouham M'Pende ne sont pas fonctionnelles. Cependant, trois unités PEV sur 4 visitées dans la sous préfecture de l'Ombella M'Poco pratiquent le PEV (Damara, Bossembélé et Yaloké) ;

Le suivi nutritionnel (la courbe de croissance, l'assistance en produit PAM) n'est pas réalisé.

La moitié du personnel de santé est sur place. Cependant leur niveau de qualification n'est pas suffisant et on déplore le manque de médecins qui sont essentiels dans l'organisation des services et l'assurance et la qualité des soins. Malgré l'assistance de COOPI dans la fourniture des médicaments essentiels et la motivation du personnel disponible, les structures sanitaires fonctionnent en deçà de leur capacité préalable aux évènements.

[...]

L'état de santé de la population, surtout celui du couple mère/enfant est précaire. Les cas de rougeole ont été signalés dans toutes les formations sanitaires visitées. La situation est plus alarmante dans la sous préfecture de Nana - Bakassa où 70 décès ont été signalés chez les enfants. Cela a conduit MSF à mener une campagne de vaccination. Par ailleurs, des cas de malnutrition et de diarrhées ont été signalés". (UN Resident Coordinator, 31 July 2003)

Water and sanitation

Inadequate supply of clean water for returning IDPs (July 2003)

- Water facilities seriously damaged during the six-months of fighting
- Many of those materials as well as those looted from hospitals are being sold in local markets
- No social, health or administrative infrastructure is working in Ouham Province

"The supply of clean water is not guaranteed everywhere. The maintenance of water points started to be neglected well before the conflict due to lack of funds. Where there are urban water supply systems, the problems are most often linked to the proper functioning of the pumps. The lack of adequate staff, fuel, electricity and spare parts all add to the problems."(ICRC, 8 July 2003)

"A UN humanitarian assessment mission to the northern province of Ouham, in the Central African Republic, found that water facilities had been seriously damaged during six-months of fighting, Diego Zorilla, who headed the 2-6 May mission, told IRIN on Wednesday.

'The most urgent needs are in water facilities and sanitation,' Zorilla, head of the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) bureau in CAR, said.

The mission, he said, found that just six of the 20 wells UNICEF had dug in Bossangoa, 305 km north of Bangui, the capital, were still in a good state. In addition, he said that equipment belonging to the state water utility, the Societe des Eaux de Centrafrique, had been looted; rendering the company unable to provide safe drinking water.

'Many of those materials as well as those looted from hospitals are being sold in local markets,' he said. 'We held meetings with chiefs of neighbourhoods to urge them to convince the population to return those materials.'

Private and public buildings were vandalised, looted or destroyed during the rebellion. 'No social, health or administrative infrastructure is working in Ouham Province,' he said." (UN OCHA, 8 May 2003)

Shelter and non-food items

IDPs in the bush in need of provisional shelter (Special report, 2007)

Given the number of villages burnt and destroyed and the living conditions of the displaced, shelter was among the highest needs among IDPs as showed by a UN multi-agency rapid assessment mission to the north-west in July 2006. IDPs have been living in makeshift shelters near their fields, often many kilometres from their villages. They lack even the most basic necessities, such as toiletries, materials for rigging improvised shelters, blankets and mats to sleep on.

One of the main challenges is to provide IDPs in the bush with provisional shelter in order to ease their living conditions without making their situation permanent. In some cases tarpaulins distributed to IDPs have exposed them to further attacks by the army and the rebels because they became more visible. Some displaced need local materials to build their shelters.

ACCESS TO EDUCATION

General

Urgent need for emergency education (Special report, 2007)

No emergency education has been provided to children currently living with their parents in the bush. In the five conflict-affected prefectures bordering Chad, there are some 290,000 school-age children – including 140,000 girls – of whom more than one-third have no access to education. As mentioned earlier, there are some 70,000 internally displaced children in the CAR, out of which it is known that 30,000 displaced in 2006 have had no access to education. It is unclear if the rest of internally displaced children are among the 100,000 children who have had no access to education in 2006 due to the closure of schools as a result of insecurity. Furthermore, in the communes of Nana Barya, Babessar and Mia Pende, at least 20,000 children have missed the 2005/2006 academic year and will miss the next one too. Even in some areas where civilians have reportedly been able to return, parents are reluctant to send their children to school – considered an easy target in case of attack. They prefer to keep their children at home in order to be able to flee with them in case of danger.

In displacement-affected areas, the education sector has been seriously damaged as a result of years of instability. Prior to the conflicts, there were not enough schools facilities available in Ouham, Ouham-Pende and Nana-Gribizi prefectures and the school enrolment was low. To date, it is estimated that one-third of the existing school buildings have been destroyed as a direct result of the ongoing conflict. Benches and other school equipment were looted or damaged during the 2002-2003 conflict. Most teachers have fled the violence. Furthermore, most of these teachers have not recently received any basic training. During the 2005/2006 academic year, only two schools were operational in the whole sous-préfecture of Markounda.

Adolescents fleeing to the capital and other cities are particularly affected as they lack the necessary training to find jobs. There are reports of underage girls resorting to prostitution to survive.

In areas where they were not burnt to the ground, schools were closed because of insecurity, including those managed by the Roman Catholic Church. The main consequence is a fall in primary school attendance from 63 per cent in 1996 to 43 per cent in 2000 and 40 per cent in 2003-2004, one of the lowest rates in all Africa. In 2005, more than 117 schools were closed, leaving some 370,000 children (207,300 of them girls) without education, and more than 280,000 (130,000 girls) with only precarious education, teachers being often replaced by untrained parent teachers. In 2006, insecurity caused the closure of even more schools in the north. Meanwhile, the government institutions responsible for turning around these dismal indicators are themselves weakened by the years of civil strife, salary arrears and low capacity.

It is therefore urgent to provide emergency education in the areas of displacement, rehabilitate school infrastructures, replace destroyed equipment and facilitate the return of teachers and pupils within conflict zones in order to give effect to the right for internally displaced children to receive education which is compulsory at the primary level.

Collapsed education sector in areas of return (February 2005)

- Around 400,000 out of 600,000 pupils have no access to basic education
- Most primary and secondary schools remained closed up to May 2003
- 500 primary and 40 secondary schools have closed in four war-affected prefectures
- Parents perception that school does not result in concrete job offers for their children

- Salary arrears to teachers aggravating factor
-

"The education sector is also in crisis, despite the effective resumption of classes during the academic year 2004-2005. Around 400,000 out of 600,000 pupils have no access to basic education, a third of teachers have no training and school facilities continue to suffer from repeated looting. The literacy rate is 37 per cent, while the net school enrolment ratio is 49 per cent."(World Bank, 21 February 2005)

"La situation déjà préoccupante du secteur de l'éducation s'est trouvée aggravée par les événements militaires d'octobre 2002 à Mars 2003. Jusqu'au mois de Mai 2003, toutes les écoles primaires et secondaires des préfectures du Nord du pays, de l'Est et certaines zones du Sud-Ouest du pays sont restées fermées. Infrastructures scolaires détruites, pillages du matériel scolaires et pédagogique et dérouté des enseignants réfugiés à Bangui sont autant de facteurs qui ont entravé l'accès des enfants à l'école. Dans 4 des préfectures touchées par les conflits, 39 écoles préscolaires, 500 écoles primaires et 40 établissements secondaires ont fermés.

A l'instabilité politique et militaire s'est ajoutée une tension sociale provoquée par l'irrégularité dans le paiement des salaires. L'impact de cette situation sur l'éducation est désastreux et se solde par des taux de scolarisation tombés au plus bas. Le taux net de scolarisation est passé de 63% en 1995, à 43% (46% pour les garçons et 39% pour les filles). Seule 48% de la population est alphabétisée et les disparités sont grandes : 34,8% dans les zones rurales et 66,8% dans les zones urbaines ; 64,7% pour les hommes et 33,5% pour les femmes.

En Juin 2003, la situation a évolué positivement avec la reprise effective de l'année académique 2002-2003 sur toute l'étendue du territoire. Cependant, les capacités institutionnelles du Ministère de l'Education Nationale et des inspections académiques sont amoindries (bureaux brûlés ou pillés, archives détruites, absence de fournitures, de manuels scolaires et pédagogiques, bâtiments scolaires privé de portes, fenêtres et tables banc). Des déplacements des populations sont à envisager et prendre en compte dans le cadre de la scolarisation." (UNOCHA, Juillet 2004)

"The military events of October 2002 to March 2003 worsened the already deteriorated education sector, marked particularly by a teachers' strike. Until May 2003, most primary and secondary schools in the northern parts of the country remained closed, while the eastern parts remained mostly inaccessible together with parts of the southwest. The destruction of school infrastructures, the looting of schools and educational equipment as well as the flight of hundreds of teachers who took refuge in Bangui further worsened the access of children to education. Altogether, 58 pre-schools, 891 primary schools and 40 secondary schools were closed, leaving out 1,779 pre-school age children, 152,443 primary school students, and 16,652 secondary students. 45 instructors, 2,119 teachers and 328 lecturers were also affected.

The political and military instability was accompanied by social tension provoked by irregular payment of salaries to civil servants (many of whom having accumulated up to 32 months of arrears). The impact of this situation is disastrous for the education sector: the net enrolment rate deteriorated from 63% in 1995, to 43% in 2003 (46% for the boys and 39% for the girls). Only 48% of the population is literate, with large disparities: 34.8% in the rural areas vs. 66.8% in the urban areas; 64.7% for men vs. 33.5% for women.

Due to the firm political will of the Government, the situation in the education sector evolved in June 2003 with the effective resumption of the academic year 2002-2003 in the entire country. The academic year is divided in 2 zones: the capital Bangui and the zones of the southwest of the country where it covers the period from October 2002 to July 2003, and the rest of the country from May to December 2003. The final exams (Certificates of High Schools, A-Level, etc.) were actually organised in the first zone.

Problems continue regarding the collapse of the institutional capacities of the Ministry of Education (MoE) as their offices have been burnt and archives destroyed; local school inspectorates have been looted, supplies and school manuals for students in the former conflict zones are unavailable, educational manuals for teachers are lacking, doors and windows of schools buildings have been looted and tables and benches that have been broken and used by the fighters as firewood in some areas are also lacking. Education for All (EFA), the framework for action that was drafted by the international community in 2000 in Dakar, is not being pressed by the responsible authorities, who it seems do not give it high priority.

The parents are completely impoverished and their economic capacities have been wiped out by the events. Two bad cotton harvests as well as lack of agricultural produce, looted and stolen by the fighters for their survival, have left parents without resources to pay teachers from their own pockets.

The lack of effective communication to parents on the benefits for the community of their children's education, together with the risks and insecurity of trying to access schools, constitute a handicap for school attendance. In addition, schools are perceived by the communities as an institution to attend in order to be able to integrate into the public administration of the country. Yet most of the vacancies do not appear openly on the job market. This situation contributes to reinforce the parents' reluctance to enrol their children in an educational system they consider as useless, as it is not resulting in concrete job offers for their children.

Early childhood care and education equally calls for urgent action. Many under-five children are left unattended in their villages. No structure is envisaged to take care of them: the parents leave them alone in the village while working on the fields. Many children are suffering from malnutrition or malaria, and are exposed to various dangers such as road accidents and snakebite. Some of the children have been hurt causing fires while playing. This lack of protection for small children and of early childhood education is a result of a lack of policy in this domain." (UNOCHA, 18 November 2003)

"Most certainly, the educational sector, already undermined by frequent and prolonged strikes by teachers, stands out as one of the hardest hit by the last armed conflict. The UN would, therefore, collaborate with other partners to carry out a thorough needs assessment, so as to better understand the urgent problems faced by the sector. In the meantime, there are indications that the conflict has had a significantly negative impact on all schools in the most affected areas: buildings damaged, desks looted, lack of equipment, library and teaching material looted, etc. All the schools within combat zones were closed down, in all 58 nursery schools with an enrolment of 1,779 pupils and 45 teachers; 891 primary schools with 152,443 pupils and 2,119 teachers; and 40 secondary schools. Furthermore, some 200 teachers accompanied by 2,000 students left the occupied regions for Bangui, where they sought admission into schools, further stretching the school infrastructures in Bangui." (UN OCHA, 8 May 2003)

ISSUES OF SELF-RELIANCE AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Self-reliance

Many houses rebuilt in areas of return (March 2005)

- A cotton-processing factory in one of the war-affected districts has restarted operations (March 2005)
- Concern that increased cash-flow in local economy will attract bandits
- The rebellion that ended with a change of regime on 15 March 2003 devastated the country's agriculture, health and education sectors
- The five provinces of Ouham, Ouham Pende, Nana Grebizi, Kemo and parts of Ombella Mpoko were most affected

"Citizens of the CAR are using money less than they used to. The UNDP estimates that 95 percent of the population live on less than \$1 a day, up from 67 percent in 2000.

People have been mostly bartering, or subsisting on food they grow themselves, but without money they have been unable to access the fee-based health care system. The wards in hospitals and health clinics visited by IRIN were mostly empty.

Health officials have said there was evidence that diseases previously brought under control were now spreading again, such as human sleeping sickness and river blindness. There has also been a new outbreak of tropical ulcers.

Moreover, the government estimates that 15 percent of Central Africans have contracted HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

The transitional government has been unable to provide other social services. "Two-thirds of the country's children do not go to school. Three-quarters of the teachers here had no formal training," Ntumba said.

There are small signs of economic recovery. In Bossangoa, many homes that were destroyed during the fighting have been rebuilt. In February, a cotton-processing factory in the town that was looted during the conflict finally restarted operations.

The factory is expected to inject cash into the local economy by paying factory workers, as well as cotton farmers. However, the managers at the cotton factory expressed concern that the unidentified armed groups could learn of the new influx of cash and increase their attacks on civilians."(IRIN, 18 March 2005)

"Cotton farmer Faustin Bagaza, 55, wears the cloak of poverty around him even tighter these days. Despite harvesting his crop for two successive years, he has made no sales. The reason? A rebellion in northwestern Central African Republic (CAR) that has devastated the country's agriculture, health, education and other services.

"I have kept the cotton I harvested in 2002 and 2003 in my house and nobody has come to buy it," he told IRIN on 26 February.

Bagaza lives in Sibut, Kemo Province, 185 km northeast of the nation's capital, Bangui. He has been able to keep his three children at Sibut Secondary School, despite his meagre earnings and despite not having planted cotton in 2004.

Bagaza's situation is not unique. Poverty seems to be the experience of most people in the northwest, an area that bore the brunt of a six-month rebellion waged by former army chief of staff Francois Bozize against President Ange-Felix Patasse. The rebellion ended on 15 March 2003 when Bozize overthrew Patasse.

The country has undergone several armed conflicts since the mid-1990s that badly affected the population. But unlike the 1996-7 mutinies and the May 2001 coup attempt by former leader Andre Kolingba, which affected a section of Bangui residents, Bozize's October 2002 to March 2003 rebellion wrecked havoc in five provinces: Ouham, Ouham Pende, Nana Grebizi, Kemo and parts of Ombella Mpoko. Thousands of people abandoned their homes for the bush or for neighbouring Chad.

As a result of the rebellion, most peasant farmers lost two planting seasons and have had no buyers for their last cotton harvest; health and educational facilities were looted, exposing people to diseases and epidemics; and insecurity increased in villages as armed robbers acquired modern guns and ammunition.

So far, an estimated 41,000 refugees remain in southern Chad, afraid to return home because of continued insecurity, the collapse of infrastructure, and destruction of villages. "(IRIN, 3 March 2004)

PATTERNS OF RETURN AND RESETTLEMENT

Overview

Obstacle to IDPs return (Special report, 2007)

The greatest barriers to IDP return, resettlement or reintegration are the continuing fighting and harassment from the army and bandits. In Ouham-Pendé and Ouham, some communities are stuck in the bush and are unwilling or unable to return because they fear becoming targets on their way home. Those coming from conflict-affected areas are frequently harassed as rebel sympathisers by the army at checkpoints. Along the main roads, people run away on hearing the sound of vehicles for fear that they might be carrying government troops.

Efforts by the government to encourage IDPs to return have failed due to the ongoing fighting. The government recently launched a campaign with the aim of convincing the displaced to return home although the security situation had not improved. In Nana Barya and Bémal-Békay, those who tried to return home after a lull in fighting, were subsequently attacked and their village burnt to the ground again by government security forces. Sometimes, security forces shoot randomly at civilians when they pass through a village, causing panic.

Given the security situation, return does not seem to be an option for many IDPs. Therefore, the humanitarian response should aim at easing current living conditions of IDPs in their area of refuge.

General

40,000 refugees from the Central African Republic in Chad refuse to return because of insecurity (July 2004)

- Systematic looting of villages bordering Chad forced 40,000 to cross the border
- The refugees are currently staying in UNHCR WFP supported camps
- Most of the refugees refuse categorically to return as long as insecurity prevails and Bozizé remains in power

"La rébellion de Bozizé a eu pour conséquence le pillage systématique de tous les villages centrafricains frontaliers avec le Tchad de 2001 à 2004. [...]"

Les autorités locales notamment les Sous Préfets de Paoua (RCA) et de Goré (Tchad) ont également pris part à cette rencontre. Depuis le 15 mars 2003, date de la prise du pouvoir par Bozizé à Bangui, 40 000 personnes de cette sous préfecture ont fui vers Goré où un camp leur a été aménagé à Amboko. La majorité d'entre eux refuse catégoriquement de regagner leur village tant que les tchadiens continueront à entretenir l'insécurité dans cette zone et que Bozizé sera au pouvoir. Les efforts du PAM et du HCR n'y ont rien pu. Il y a quelques semaines environs, une rencontre de ce type avait eu lieu à Markounda dans l'Ouham."(CentrAfrique Presse, 8 July 2004)

Insecurity impeding return of civil authorities (November 2003)

- Insecurity discourages displaced people from returning
- Return of those who fled the hinterland to Bangui (including state employees and civil servants) is subject to the payment of their salaries and the rebuilding of infrastructure
- New population displacements are unlikely

"[...]despite the significant efforts made by the military forces (supported by the contingent provided by the Economic and Monetary Community [CEMAC] countries), the insecurity in the eastern and northern parts of the country remains a major problem. This lack of confidence is impeding the return of the civil authorities to these regions and disrupting the launch of normal activities, thus discouraging people from returning home." (UN OCHA, p. 5, 18 November 2003)

" Displaced persons are currently returning from the bush. However, the return of those who fled the hinterland to Bangui (including state employees and civil servants) is subject to the payment of their salaries and the rebuilding of infrastructure on the spot. Although new population displacements are unlikely, security remains problematic in the northern border region. Attacks by armed elements are again increasing. Similarly sporadic incursions into southern regions of the country from the DRC cannot be totally excluded. As a result an emergency stock (food and non-food) has been pre-positioned in case of any eventuality". (ICRC, July 2003)

Displaced returned rapidly once the violence in the capital ended (May 2003)

- Thousands of people fled their homes during the violence in Bangui, particularly in northern sections of the city
- The violence triggered resentment against Congolese and Chadians who lived in Bangui
- Some 6,000 residents fled from Bossembele, 160 km north of Bangui

"Thousands of people fled their homes during the violence in Bangui, particularly in northern sections of the city. Several thousand fled to villages as much as 50 miles (80 km) north of Bangui before rapidly returning home once the violence in the capital ended.

A small number of Bangui residents managed to flee across the country's nearby border with Congo-Kinshasa, despite harassment at the border by CAR government soldiers who blocked some families from leaving.

The violence triggered resentment against Congolese and Chadians who lived in Bangui primarily as migrants. Up to 10,000 Chadians fled back to Chad, according to government officials there. Some 1,000 to 2,000 Congolese nationals took shelter in their country's embassy in Bangui and returned to Congo-Kinshasa in November with assistance from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). It was unclear how many, if any, of the Chadian and Congolese returnees were refugees.

Additional population displacement occurred during November and December as the violence moved to northern villages. Some 6,000 residents fled internally from Bossembele, 100 miles (160 km) north of Bangui. About 1,000 refugees from CAR fled to Chad, according to government officials there." (U:S Committee for Refugees, 29 May 2003)

Internally Displaced Persons have started going home (February 2003)

- 20,000 residents had been hiding in the bush near Bozoum since 19 December 2002
- Even though the IDPs were returning, the town was still insecure

" Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from Bozoum (384 km northwest of the capital, Bangui) have started going home after government and allied forces recaptured the town on 13 February, government-owned Radio Centrafrique reported on 22 February.

'Presently, a precarious calm prevails in Bozoum,' Jean Pierre Sacko, Bozoum's deputy-governor, told the radio.

Bozoum's 20,000 residents have been hiding in the bush since 19 December 2002, when rebels loyal to Francois Bozize, the former army chief of staff, occupied that town. Since then, they have received no aid as humanitarian workers could not reach the area.

Sacko said even though the IDPs were returning, the town was still insecure. He had asked the government to send police and gendarmes to guarantee public order and security. He said some rebels, who were unfamiliar with the area, were still hiding in abandoned homes and in the surrounding mountains. He noted that his services, youth organisations and the local Red Cross were examining ways of burying the corpses now littering the town so as to avoid epidemics." (UN OCHA, 24 February 2003)

HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

General

Insecurity hampers humanitarian access to IDPs (November 2006)

- NGOs told to suspend operations in northwestern town of Paoua
- Army complaints that humanitarian organisations have been providing bandits and rebels with medical care and food
- Insecurity forces MSF to cancel two mobile clinics south Kabo

IRIN, 20 November 2006

"The army of the Central African Republic has told aid agencies to suspend their activities in the northwestern town of Paoua until military operations against armed groups in the area are over, the military and aid agency officials said on Monday.

"We have been asked to stop our operations in and around the town of Paoua for security reasons," Mario Baldin, the head of Italian NGO COOPI in Bangui, said.

The order also affects Médecins Sans Frontières-France and the International Committee of the Red Cross which operate in the area.

As a result of this measure, residents will be without medical services as hospitals and clinics have already been destroyed since the army began fighting armed groups in the area in January. There is no clear indication of just how long the suspension of humanitarian activity will last. MSF workers in Paoua said children were the most affected by the fighting. Many were malnourished, they said, and 95 percent in the Paoua Sub-prefecture Hospital are suffering from malaria.

Although the NGOs have been asked to suspend operations, they are not required to leave Paoua. Consequently, Baldin said, COOPI would follow the example of the International Committee of the Red Cross and remain in the area. MSF-France said on Friday it preferred "to keep silent" on its present and planned activities in the area.

For the past two weeks, Baldin said, Paoua remaining residents had been fleeing Paoua, fearing they would get caught up in the fighting. "When you talk to people in the town you feel they have the feeling that something drastic is likely to happen in the region," he said.

Before the fighting erupted on 29 January, the town's population was between 35,000 and 40,000. Some have now fled to neighbouring Chad. The town's remaining population is unknown. The decision by the army in Paoua to suspend humanitarian activities in the region has followed army complaints that since January humanitarian organisations have been providing armed bandits and rebels with medical help and food in the zone.

However, Baldin denied any deliberate action in this respect. "We don't know who the rebels are," he said. "We are providing assistance to villagers in need and we are unable to tell the difference between civilians and armed bandits or rebels."

Armed groups and rebels in Paoua are not uniformed, making it impossible to distinguish them from civilians. The most significant is the Armée Populaire pour la Restauration de la République et de la démocratie, headed by Bedaya N'Djadder, a former gendarme who defected from the service.

Since October 2005, armed groups have attacked the army several times in the Paoua area. Since then fighting has intensified."

MSF, 20 November 2006, pp.2-3

“Due to renewed fighting in northwestern CAR, the situation for the population has deteriorated, and our ability to deploy medical assistance throughout the region has been hampered.

The resurgence of violence around Paoua in October forced people to hide in the forest again. As a result, the number of mobile clinic consultations in that area slightly decreased. Mobile clinics in that area are currently cancelled or suspended. The violence has also forced us to postpone the start date of MSF's work in two health centres where we intend to provide fixed consultations.

On the road between Kabo and Kaga Bandoro, an MSF exploratory mission at the beginning of November found many villages had been attacked and partially burnt. Huge numbers of people had fled to the bush to escape the violence. MSF has set up two mobile clinics south of Kabo in order to provide basic health care for the population twice a week, but unfortunately these clinics have now been canceled due to insecurity.”

Volatile security across the country, but NGOs present in most districts (April 2005)

- Increasing social tension in Bangui restricts movements
- Bandits on the roads in the provinces
- Reports currently reaching Bangui suggest many cases of exaction committed by errant soldiers armed gangs
- Essential that security be strengthened to ensure minimum safety standards for humanitarian activities

The mere size of the country, poor road infrastructure, a very limited number of NGOs and UN agencies in combination with the persistent insecurity pose serious obstacles to the work of humanitarian agencies. Nevertheless, the French Red Cross, Oxfam Quebec, MSF Spain and COOPI are present in many districts, including some of the worst affected, generally moving around without military escort. The access for UN personnel is more limited as security regulations require military escort for most travels outside Bangui (E-mail, 29 April 2005)

"Since Bozize took control of the capital, unidentified gunmen have continued to stage attacks in various rural areas, by setting up roadblocks and taking whatever goods they can.

"They seem to be mostly interested in looting, rather than controlling territory," Lamine Cisse, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General to the CAR, said. "It would really become a problem if politicians manipulate the armed groups."

The groups, Cisse said, were "unemployed youths and former soldiers who joined Bozize's rebellion - as well as former Chadian troops". Some of the Chadian fighters supporting Bozize have remained in the CAR and joined the nation's army.

Other officials have speculated that the unidentified gunmen include Patasse's former presidential guards and Congolese rebels. Civilians may also be among the faceless attackers.

Unidentified armed groups have been active in remote eastern areas too, close to the border with Sudan's Darfur region, where an estimated 20,000 Sudanese refugees have crossed into the CAR.

"The east has few roads and poor communications with [the] capital Bangui," said Luke Beeder, country head of Médecins Sans Frontières, one of the few NGOs in the CAR with a programme in the area.

Frequent attacks have also been reported in northwest CAR, towards Chad, in an area where fighting was particularly intense between 2002 and 2003. People living in towns and villages there told IRIN of the presence of armed groups.

"There was [an] attack just last week, just 20 km from here," one man in the provincial town of Bossangoa, said in March.

He added that some of the people who fled into the forest in 2002 were still there.

Farther south at the village of Ndjoh, a man told IRIN that attackers only target the Fula (semi-nomadic cattle herders), because they own cows.

"We don't have problems any more in our village because we have nothing left to steal," he said. (IRIN, 18 March 2005)

"Persistent insecurity prevails for populations outside of Bangui, and the internal security situation remains precarious. Clashes took place in Bangui, 16-24 April, between Government forces and former rebels (who didn't feel they had received all the benefits promised for their support during the rebellion) and, as the economic crisis deepens, there are concerns that such clashes will become more frequent. Insecurity outside Bangui curtails humanitarian access."(UNOCHA, 8 December 2004)

"Pendant la période sous revue,[May-July 2004] la situation générale des droits de l'Homme s'est dégradée. La situation sécuritaire constitue toujours une source de grande inquiétude. Dans l'arrière-pays, les coupeurs de route continuent leurs actions.

C'est dans ce contexte que le 25 mai, au cours de la cérémonie solennelle de lancement du Conseil de Paix et de Sécurité, le Président de la Commission de l'Union Africaine a soutenu que "le problème de l'insécurité est encore loin d'être résolu en RCA".

[...]

"Durant la période sous revue, la situation sécuritaire dans la région [de Bouar]reste très préoccupante. Des cas d'opération de coupeurs de route et de prise d'otages d'enfants contre rançon ont été enregistrés. Des transporteurs signalent des exactions aux différents postes de police sur l'axe Bangui- Bouar."(UNOHCHR, 21 September 2004)

"Depuis les événements de mars 2003, la sécurité dans Bangui et ses environs immédiats s'est progressivement améliorée. Toutefois, comme suite à un regain de tension sociale dans la capitale, il convient d'éviter pour le moment tout le quartier adjacent à l'université (avenue et rond-point des Martyrs, portion de l'avenue Boganda) et faire résolument demi-tour dès qu'un barrage est en vue.

De même, la sécurité dans les provinces est loin d'être entièrement rétablie. Outre les zones traditionnellement déconseillées (cf. rubrique numéro 4), il convient de ne pas se rendre, jusqu'à nouvel ordre, dans l'ouest du pays (route de Bouar à Nola), où sévissent des coupeurs de route bien armés depuis la mi-février.

La situation pouvant évoluer très rapidement, il est recommandé dans tous les cas aux voyageurs de prendre l'attache préalable du consulat général à Bangui (Tel (236) 61 30 00 - 61 57 84)." (GoF, 19 July 2004)

"One important constraint in undertaking humanitarian assistance activities in the CAR at the moment is insecurity across the country, which increases poverty and the vulnerability of the population. While the capital, Bangui, is secured by the troops of the French-sponsored Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa States (CEMAC) contingent whose strength stood at around 350 prior to the coup d'etat and which is set to increase with the arrival of a Chadian contingent. As for the rest of the country, reports currently reaching Bangui suggest many cases of exaction committed by errant soldiers armed gangs. The government has stated its willingness to launch activities aimed at restoring law and order within the country in the next few days. This operation might however take a long time, especially in the most affected areas. In the meantime, it is essential that security be strengthened to ensure minimum safety standards for humanitarian activities throughout the country. This will be achieved through an increase in the number and a wider geographical assignment of security officers of the UN Security Unit and more effective circulation and exchange of information on security between national authorities, the UN and humanitarian organisations."(UN OCHA, 1 May 2003)

Security has improved considerably in Bangui (April 2005)

- Security in Bangui has improved considerably since the coup d'etat in March 2003
- Drive slowly and stop upon request from law and order entities
- Many controls are abusive, but stay calm and negotiate
- Some regions in the provinces should be avoided

"Depuis les événements de mars 2003, la sécurité dans Bangui et ses environs immédiats s'est sensiblement améliorée. Cependant, la sécurité dans certains secteurs de l'arrière pays n'est pas encore totalement rétablie.

La situation pouvant évoluer assez rapidement, il est recommandé dans tous les cas aux voyageurs de prendre l'attache préalable du consulat général à Bangui (Tel (236) 61 30 00 - 61 57 84).

1/ La circulation routière dans Bangui exige certaines précautions :

- Rouler doucement et s'arrêter à toute injonction des forces de l'ordre. Dans ce cas, rester courtois et s'armer de patience. Beaucoup de contrôles sont abusifs, mais il faut savoir négocier calmement le "passage".
- En cas d'accident avec dommages corporels, ne pas s'arrêter et rejoindre immédiatement la gendarmerie la plus proche (avenue Nasser à Bangui). Prévenir dès que possible le Consulat général ou le poste de sécurité de l'Ambassade (61 30 00).
- En matière de documents (passeports, carte grise, permis de conduire), il est recommandé de n'avoir avec soi que des photocopies certifiées conformes.

2/ Photographies dans Bangui

- Il est fortement déconseillé de faire des photographies ou reportages video dans la capitale.
- Il est strictement interdit, notamment, de photographier : le palais présidentiel, les abords de la villa du chef de l'Etat (PK 11), ainsi que tous les édifices publics.

3/ Zones interdites dans la capitale :

- Le rocher de l'artillerie (devant l'hôtel Oubangui, en bordure du fleuve) et les antennes de "la colline aux panthères".

4/ Déplacements en province :

- Tout déplacement en province par voie routière nécessite certaines précautions préalables en fonction de la zone concernée.

- Sont particulièrement déconseillées :

- La région nord-ouest du pays au delà d'une ligne Bouar-Bozoum-Bossangoa-Batangafo-Kabo en direction du Tchad (présence occasionnelle de bandits de grand chemin).

- La région de Birao à l'extrême nord-ouest du pays (en proie à des incursions de braconniers en saison sèche et d'autres bandes armées non clairement identifiées)"(IZF, 15 March 2005)

The new leader of the Central African Republic assures humanitarian workers on security (May 2003)

- The restoration of security topped the new government's priorities
- The major problem for the implementation of a medical project in Ouham and Ouham Pende remains security
- Absence of state structure encourages robberies and prevents return movements

"Central African Republic leader Francois Bozize told officials of a humanitarian NGO that is planning medical aid to the north of the country that their security was assured, government-run Radio Centrafrique reported.

The assurance was given during a meeting between Bozize and officials of Cooperazione Internazionale (COOPI), an Italian NGO.

'He has reassured us very much, saying that the restoration of security topped his government's priorities', Emerico Colombo, a COOPI official, told the radio after their meeting with Bozize.

Colombo said COOPI presented its medical project to Bozize, detailing how the NGO planned to support health structures in Ouham and Ouham Pende provinces in northern CAR. Both provinces were badly affected by a six-month rebellion that pitted fighters loyal to Bozize against forces of the then president, Ange-Felix Patasse. Bozize comes from Ouham Pende.

During the rebellion, the east was totally cut off from supply routes. The rebellion ended when Bozize ousted Patasse in a coup on 15 March. Patasse is currently in exile in Lome, the capital of Togo.

'The major problem for the implementation of this project remains security,' Colombo said; adding that the EC Humanitarian Office, ECHO, would financially support the project.

Although provincial governors have been named, some have not reported to their stations. This has encouraged armed robberies and discouraged those displaced by fighting from returning home. "(UN OCHA, 9 May 2003)

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL RESPONSES

National Response (Special report, 2007)

The government response to the situation of internal displacement has been minimal, not least since at both the policy and operational levels there is little knowledge or experience of tackling humanitarian crises in general. Although the Economy, Planning and International Cooperation Ministry apparently has responsibility for coordinating the humanitarian response, and the Ministry of the Family, responsibility for protecting IDP rights, the government lacks the necessary expertise to deal effectively with acute situations of internal displacement, and a response strategy to the internal displacement situation has yet to be developed. In November 2006, a National Committee for Human Rights was set up with *inter alia* the mandate to promote and protect the rights of vulnerable groups including IDPs. However this newly-created body still has to elaborate and adopt its national action plan.

The situation has been compounded by the continuing absence of viable local administrations and social service workers in many parts of the country, particularly the conflict-affected areas of the north. Some local authorities complained that humanitarian agencies had better access to the conflict-affected areas than they did. Therefore, humanitarian organisations *de facto* have been in many cases substituting government institutions.

The government has plans to create more military outposts in the areas affected by conflict in order to provide security and better protection to the population. However, parts of the government security forces are among those perpetrating abuses against civilians in conflict-affected areas. Although the perpetrators of these crimes are well known, no action has been taken to bring them to justice. The government has not yet fully incorporated into domestic law the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and other international human rights and humanitarian law instruments which the CAR has ratified. These lacunas in the legal and judicial systems together with lack of political will and law enforcement structures are at the root of the ongoing gross human rights and international humanitarian law violations perpetrated against civilians with total impunity. Indeed, the Human Rights Committee recommended that the CAR should “ensure that all cases of human rights violations brought to the attention of the government be investigated, and that those responsible for such violations, including civil servants, army personnel and police officials, are prosecuted and punished”.

Some national NGOs have responded to the needs of the displaced. The national Red Cross and Caritas CAR are involved in sensitising people with respect to the use of water (treatment and food security) and disease prevention. In collaboration with the ICRC the National Red Cross is distributing non-food items in conflict-affected areas.

International Response (Special report, 2007)

At the international level, at least until mid-2006, the response was very weak as it suffered from a low level of funding, and shortcomings in monitoring, information management and coordination between UN agencies and NGOs which was rather *ad hoc* and informal. This was partly due to the absence of a UN humanitarian coordinator between October 2005 and June 2006. There was a need for an improved and more systematic and well-planned coordination; with a newly-appointed humanitarian coordinator, the UN agencies have started to address this problem.

The lack of a sufficient humanitarian presence in the country, including the displacement-affected areas, and the limited human resources within humanitarian organisations also explain the poor reporting and lack of attention to the humanitarian situation in the CAR during the first half of 2006. Since the beginning of 2006, the number of IDPs reportedly rose threefold from 50,000 to 150,000. Yet, only a handful of aid agencies are providing assistance. The shortage of NGOs as implementing partners further limits the capacity to deliver aid, with only Médecins sans Frontières (France, Spain and Netherlands), COOPI, ICRC, the International Partnership for Human Development, National Red Cross, Caritas CAR and a number of Roman Catholic missions directly providing assistance to the affected populations. More international UN agency and NGO staff are needed in conflict-affected areas to improve assistance and protection to IDPs, and increase the sense of security of the affected population.

Yet with limited capacities, since mid-2006 the UN agencies have decided to organise the humanitarian response in the CAR by sectors with clear leadership and accountability, headed by the Humanitarian Coordinator supported by UN OCHA. A key pillar of coordination is the Humanitarian Community Partnership Team consisting of UN agencies, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and national and international NGOs. UNHCR has taken responsibility for IDP protection and assistance in the country and has hired two seconded protection officers to conduct a rapid assessment of protection needs in the two prefectures of Ouham and Ouham-Pendé. UNHCR is sensitising the relevant government and local authorities on the need for IDP protection and has conducted a number of training courses for local authorities on the Guiding Principles, and together with the IDMC, for humanitarian monitors deployed by Caritas. UNICEF has taken responsibility for education, shelter and non-food items, and water and sanitation, FAO for food security, WHO for health and UNDP for the economic recovery and infrastructure.

Consequently, UNDP, UNICEF, WHO, WFP, UNHCR in partnership with COOPI, with Caritas and the national Red Cross as local partners, and ICRC, started food and non-food items distributions in the regions of Ouham-Pendé and Ouham. Taking advantage of the fact that the population came out of the bush to benefit from the food distributions, they provided medical care and medicines to the displaced. MSF-Spain in Batangafo, MSF-Netherlands in Boguila and Markounda, and MSF-France in Paoua are delivering medical services mainly through mobile clinics, health centres and hospitals. In collaboration with Caritas CAR and Roman Catholic missions, the International Partnership for Human Development is reconstructing wells and sanitary facilities in different areas including those affected by insecurity such as Bozoum, Bossangoa and Kaga Bandoro.

Humanitarian access for the already very few active agencies has been limited to varying degrees by the endemic insecurity in the northern part of the country. Indeed, since the army is accusing residents of the areas where IDPs are located of being associated with the rebels, similarly humanitarian organisations were accused of feeding them. During November 2006, the CAR army told aid agencies to suspend their activities around the north-western town of Paoua until military operations against armed groups in the area could be completed. This order affected COOPI, MSF-France and the ICRC which have operations in or around Paoua. The ban prevented some 53 tonnes of WFP food supplies from being distributed to 25,000 vulnerable people. Although this ban has been suspended, aid agencies are obliged to regularly advocate to the authorities at different levels for safe access to affected populations. Furthermore broken bridges and the poor state of roads, particularly during the rainy season, have made access to remote areas in the north of the country practically impossible.

The acute lack of funding for humanitarian programmes appeared also to be one of the main factors constraining the international response. Donors appear to be hardly involved in addressing the humanitarian crisis. The 2004 and 2005 UN Consolidated Appeals (CAP) for the CAR aiming at responding to humanitarian needs of vulnerable people and helping the country's socio-economic recovery from years of crisis and decline, were less than 40 per cent funded.

Contrary to the previous years during which the CAR was one of the most neglected crises, the CAP 2006 was better funded with almost 65 per cent of the \$36 million requested. While funding for some sectors was insufficient or received only in the second half of 2006, the education sector was not funded at all; no school premises were rehabilitated or equipped and no teacher was trained as planned in the CAP 2006.

Further constraints hamper the response of international agencies to the needs of IDPs in the CAR. The aforementioned lack of monitoring and information about IDP numbers, needs and locations has been a fundamental obstacle which is expected to be addressed by a UNFPA-led survey project planned for 2007. Within the framework of the Coordinated Aid Programme 2007 for the CAR, aid agencies are requesting \$49.5 million to address most of the gaps in the humanitarian response through the promotion of human security, the provision of protection and assistance to IDPs, the reinforcement of local and national capacities and the strengthening of coordination.

Working with the government, the UN revised the United Nations Development Assistance Framework covering the period 2004-2006 and in May 2006 finalised the UNDAF for 2007- 2011. The main aims of the cooperation are strengthening democratic governance, human rights, poverty reduction and post-conflict reconstruction. However, it is unlikely that the UNDAF can be successfully implemented given the ongoing insecurity and humanitarian crisis. The displacement caused by lack of security has jeopardised the social cohesion which is a key prerequisite for a sustainable development.

By and large, the country's broader stabilisation and recovery can only succeed if the humanitarian needs of vulnerable groups are met. It is therefore essential that the IDP response strategy as defined in the CAP 2007 be funded and implemented, and that the UN and NGOs significantly increase their presence in the affected areas of the CAR to contribute to a swift transition to a post-conflict and recovery period.

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