

UNICEF HUMANITARIAN ACTION CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC DONOR UPDATE 16 JULY 2004

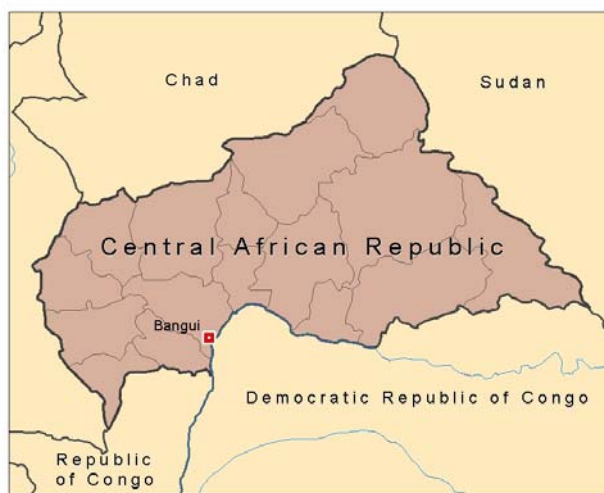
A Forgotten Crisis

- Around 20% of the Central African Republic children (CAR) die before the age of 5.
- Only 30-35% of girls attend primary schools.
- Not more than 30% of children are vaccinated against vaccine preventable diseases. The CAR is becoming a real corridor for epidemics. Several cases of polio have been registered.
- HIV-AIDS prevalence rate has already reached 15% and is among the highest in the region, resulting in a rise in the numbers of orphans and vulnerable children in great part affected by AIDS and many children live on the streets of major towns.

Landlocked, weakened by years of conflicts, looting and violence, the CAR has become the most forgotten country in-crisis in Africa. Government capacity has been constrained by the latest conflicts and the donor response is insufficient to meet the CAR developmental needs. External assistance is needed to help the Government and the population of CAR deal with this post-conflict situation and to allow the return to normal life, through the provision of basic services in Bangui and elsewhere in the country.

ISSUES FOR CHILDREN

Some 1.2 out of the 3.8 million inhabitants have **no further access to basic health services**. The destruction of basic health installations along with the looting of all sanitary equipment, medical supplies and with the collapse of the cold chain have rendered 45 EPI centres inoperational. The exodus of health workers to the capital Bangui, led to the closure of



35 % of all health facilities. As a result, measles outbreaks occur periodically. In **2003** alone some 650 cases of child deaths were registered in the Ouham, Ouham Pendé and Ombella Mpoko). At the same time, there has been an upsurge in diarrhoea, acute respiratory infections, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and parasitic diseases. CAR is the most seriously HIV-affected country in the Western and Central African region, with an estimated infection rate of **15 %** among pregnant women (2002).

All basic social services were destroyed and looted during the repeated conflicts and the Government capacity was greatly weakened and mostly the Ministry of Education. The already **low primary school attendance** rates dropped further and 58 pre-schools, 891 primary and 40 secondary schools were closed as a result of the rural teacher's exodus to Bangui. Over 250,000 children lost their right to education in zones now inaccessible due to the armed conflict.

During the past hostilities and in the aftermath **children were harmed and abused**. Children were also traumatized by massacres, military aggression and repeated sexual violence. Child Protection is therefore a major issue to be addressed now as the situation is rather alarming with the growing number of Orphans and vulnerable Children (OVC). The country counts with over 110,000 OVC. In many districts, birth registration came to a halt due to the destruction and looting of civil registration offices. The decline in traditional family support systems and the geographic dispersion of the rural population left thousands of children abandoned, orphaned, becoming an easy target for recruitment in the local militias, armed forces or were subject to rape, violence and abuse and prostitution. Large cities like Bangui and Bambari experienced a hike in the number of street children, now numbering over 6,000 in CAR. Rape of women and young girls has been systematically used by rebels and armed forces alike during the hostilities and in its aftermath. The institutional capacity of Government to respond was hampered due to the shortage of funding and know-how. Sexual violence contributed to an increase in the already high rate of **HIV/AIDS prevalence**.

In the districts most affected by the conflicts, water sources and water purification systems were also damaged or destroyed, depriving the population of **safe drinking water** increasing the risk from water-borne infections.

UNICEF'S INTERVENTIONS

In response to above, UNICEF has been carrying out humanitarian and urgent responses in the fields of Health, Nutrition, Water and Sanitation, Education and Child Protection despite its extremely low financial resources. Essential drugs were delivered to Health Posts in the conflict-affected regions. Health personnel were given training and vaccines as well as cold chain materials were delivered. HIV/AIDS testing kits and blood transfusion material were also provided to assist the Ministry of Health deal with the ever increasing and emerging priorities.

A measles campaign was organized to deal with the measles epidemic in the conflict zones. Water pumps were repaired in three major agglomerations, jerry-cans with safe water were distributed and water sources were rehabilitated and operators were given hygiene education.

Educational supplies was given out to allow the return to schools in October 2003 and UNICEF rehabilitated a number of primary schools benefiting over 50,000 children in the conflict-

affected districts. Teachers were also transported along with their families back to their villages and school. WFP also participated to this campaign and provided food to school canteens, to feed children attending schools as the livelihood on many villagers was destroyed with the looting that took place.

At the same time, UNICEF supported national institutions, NGOs and religious structures in providing assistance to the needy population and vulnerable groups. In 2003, 1,370 children in need of special protection were reinserted into a family environment. 225 village leaders and local authorities were trained on birth registration. Following the March 2003 hostilities 500 women and girls received quality medical, psycho-social and legal assistance provided with UNICEF's assistance.

2004 PLANNED ACTIONS

HEALTH

Acceleration of the Expanded Programme of Immunization (EPI)

Objective: Restore the logistics of the Expanded Programme of Immunization to prevent the outbreak of epidemics of vaccine preventable child diseases in the conflict zones (Kémo, Ouham, Ouham-Pendé, Nana Grébizi, Ombella Mpoko and Bangui) which account for over 70% of the total CAR population.

Activities:

- Re-equip health centres affected by the crises by providing 45 refrigerators, 13 freezers, 60 cool boxes, 150 vaccine-carriers, etc.;
- Provide the national storage centre with vaccines in positive and negative cold chamber to ensure the safety of vaccines;
- Train and supervise health staff and EPI managers;
- Ensure a sufficient supply of vaccines and vaccination material;
- Strengthen the supervision logistical capacities of EPI centers;
- Support the organization of additional immunization activities (Local or National Immunization Days against measles, whooping cough and polio).

Revitalization of a Health System for Children and Women

Objective: Improve access to basic healthcare for most of the conflict affected population, namely women and children.

Activities:

- Supply curative care to children and women;
- Prevent malaria among under five children and pregnant women;
- Re-launch the health system by: the training and monitoring of health staff, the equipment with medical materials and other basic sanitary supplies and with essential drugs and micronutrients (vitamin A, iron, folic acid) to existing basic health facilities.

WATER AND SANITATION

Improving Access to Safe Drinking Water and to Basic Sanitation

Objective: Supply safe drinking water and improve access to basic sanitation for populations of the districts most affected by armed conflicts: Kémo, Ouham-Pendé, Nana Grébizi, Ombella Mpoko and Bangui. (70% of the country's population)

Activities:

- Rehabilitate the water supply systems providing safe-drinking water to affected communities.
- Build safe water points and improved latrines in 200 primary schools.

EDUCATION

Re-establish Access to Primary Education with Emphasis on Girls

Main Objective: Restore fair access to primary education with emphasis on Girls

Specific Objectives:

- Rehabilitate the 500 primary schools in 4 districts of the severely affected zones;
- Reinstate geographical access to quality teaching to school-age children in affected zones;

Expected Results:

- ✓ 500 conflict-damaged schools equipped with tables, benches, boards and the necessary furniture to allow the smooth operation of these schools;
- ✓ 500 conflict-affected schools supplied with school materials, books and needed teaching materials;
- ✓ 500 schools in the conflict affected zone with working school canteens supported by WFP.

Target Population:

150,000 school-aged children from Kémo, Ouham, Ouham-Pendé and Nana-Grébizi districts.

Activities:

- ✓ Fitting of all project schools with schools supplies and materials including teacher supplies for all classes;
- ✓ Supply of minimum amount of material to teachers and pupils;
- ✓ Opening and regular supply of school canteens.

PROTECTION

Support to Orphans and other Vulnerable Children is one of the components of UNICEF's humanitarian action in the CAR. This component was described in the original CAP for 2004.

Today US\$ 362,000 have been pledged by the Swedish government, covering almost completely the most urgent needs in this field.

Opening of a Sub-Office Situated in the Conflict Zone

Objective: Operate in the conflict zone to better follow up all social developments, the security and political situation up-country and to react in time to resolve potential problems and to better respond and plan humanitarian assistance to the population in the conflict zone.

Activities:

- ✓ Rehabilitation of the Bossangoa sub-office.
- ✓ Purchase of a vehicle to ensure communication with the central level and to carry out field missions.

Sector	Target (US\$)	Funded (US\$)	Unfunded (US\$)
Immunization	1,250,000	805,000*	445,000
Basic Health System	528,409	377,949	150,460
Water and Sanitation	520,000	0	520,000
Education	975,000	160,000	815,000
Protection CAP November 2003**	369,318	404,000	- 34,682
Sub-Office	215,000	0	215,000
Total	3,857,727	941,949	2,110,778

* Donor response to the UNICEF portion of the 2004 UN Consolidated Appeal for the Central African Republic has been quite limited. Of the US\$ 3.85 million appealed, to date, US\$377,949 have been received from the US fund for UNICEF, US\$160,000 from the Swiss National Committee, while US\$404,000 were pledged by the Swedish government, altogether 24 % of the humanitarian needs. In light of the serious funding shortfalls, UNICEF has supported the essential immunization activities and basic healthcare services by advancing some funds from HQ amounting to US\$ 805,000. Funds are urgently needed to continue emergency interventions in the areas of health, water and sanitation, and education.

** Pledge from the Swedish government

Descriptions of water and education projects can be obtained separately.

Further information on the UNICEF Emergency Programme in the Central African Republic can be obtained from:

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