

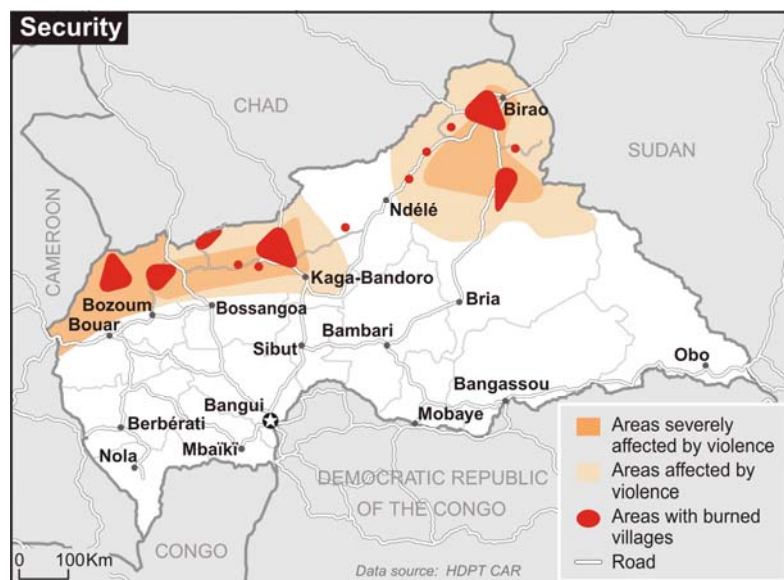
# UNICEF HUMANITARIAN ACTION UPDATE

## CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

28 MARCH 2008

### UNICEF URGENTLY REQUIRES US\$ 4.4 MILLION TO ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN IN THE AREAS OF HEALTH, WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE, PROTECTION AND EDUCATION

- 1 million people are affected by the ongoing conflict; 197,000 remain people internally displaced, 98,000 are residing in Cameroon, Chad and the Sudan
- The EUFOR mission becomes operational after delays following insecurity in Chad
- Upsurge in 'Coupeur de Route' attacks in the North-West; UNICEF vehicle targeted for the first time
- 2,000 IDPs continue to reside at CAR's first official IDP site in Kabo



## 1. ISSUES FOR CHILDREN

The Central African Republic is suffering from a multi-faceted crisis. Located right at the heart of the African continent, this forgotten country has endured more than a decade of armed conflict. The worst-affected regions are located in the northeast and northwest of the country where rebel forces and government troops continue to clash. Most significantly however, the past few months has seen a real upsurge in the number of *Coupeur de Route* attacks in the country's lawless northwest. Bandits continue to target families; burning and looting houses, kidnapping children and killing civilians. At least 197,000 people have been displaced internally. More than 2,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) are currently living in Kabo, a town in north-central CAR, located close to the Chadian border. A further 98,000 have been displaced into neighbouring Chad, Cameroon and the Sudan. In the month of February alone, thousands of new refugees poured into southern Chad fleeing *Coupeur de Route* attacks in the northwest. Many displaced continue to live in the bush without any real access to basic rights and services.

The past three months has also seen a surge in attacks on humanitarian personnel. For the first time ever, a UNICEF vehicle was targeted on 21 February whilst travelling from Bangui to Bossangoa. Many other incidents have also occurred, including an international NGO vehicle being attacked by *Coupeurs de Route* on 20 February whilst travelling from Batangafo to Bouca. Also, a woman was shot dead in an international health-NGO ambulance, when an unidentified gunman fired on the vehicle in Vakaga province of northeast CAR on March 10.

The ongoing insecurity has led to the complete decimation of public infrastructure across the North. Many schools and hospitals remain closed due to the conflict and thousands of families have lost their homes and possessions. Economic development is stagnating in much of the north and jobs remain in short supply. This chronic poverty combined with the direct impact of the conflict is severely undermining many families' ability to provide for their children.

The deterioration of CAR's already poor Human Development Ranking over the past few years (172 out of 177 countries) helps highlight the severity of the situation and the complete lack of basic social services. This situation is of great concern to UNICEF as the majority of people affected by the conflict are women and children. Maternal mortality rates are amongst the highest on the continent (1,355 per 100,000) and approximately one in five children die before reaching their fifth birthday. Chronic malnutrition affects 38% of children, whilst one in ten suffers from the acute variety. Across the country, a third of the population completely lack access to safe water and sanitation facilities, a situation which is particularly grave for the IDPs who have been forced to reside in the bush. School enrolment remains low with many schools having been destroyed in the northern prefectures. Child soldiers are still widely used in many areas, particularly in the northwest. Human rights violations continue to occur countrywide; Gender Based Violence (GBV) and the kidnapping of minors by armed bandits remain all too common.

Despite financial constraints and the challenges posed by the ongoing insecurity, UNICEF is continuing to work on the ground, expanding existing programmes and introducing new projects for 2008. The promise of an all-inclusive political dialogue between government and rebel troops means that, more than ever before, the time is right for UNICEF to step-up their field interventions and provide improved assistance to CAR's women and children.

In addition, the deployment of the joint UN-EU peacekeeping force (so-called EUFOR) would ameliorate the security situation in north-eastern CAR (Vakaga and north of the Haute Kotto regions), with protection afforded to all vulnerable civilians, including refugees, IDPs, and local populations. In this connection, the particular vulnerability of children and women should be taken into account, and special measures should be made for their protection, including from sexual violence and abuse. This includes in areas of displacement as well as those of current insecurity, to protect from further displacement and disruption of livelihoods. The latter should be taken into account during the prioritization of deployment areas. If and as the situation

stabilizes, protection will be required in areas of origin so as to facilitate return. Child and gender sensitive protection principles should be agreed with humanitarian actors, including UNICEF, on the ground.

Ultimately UNICEF CAR is working towards an end goal where security is restored and people are able to return to their areas of origin to resume their lives and livelihoods. It is essential to start thinking about and planning for early recovery in order to maximize the opportunities that might arise where programming can be implemented. It is equally important to ensure that any recovery efforts are coordinated with existing humanitarian or development strategies to ensure coherence.

## 2. UNICEF RESPONSE: ACTIVITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS AND CONSTRAINTS

Despite the difficult and often hazardous working conditions that prevail across northern CAR, UNICEF continues to have a strong field presence. Field offices in the northeast (Kaga Bandoro) and northwest (Bossangoa) ensure that UNICEF and their partners continue to address the needs of the country's most vulnerable. It must be noted that about 30 relief organisations are now operating in the remote northeast and northwest regions of CAR, revealing a significant increase in the aid presence since 2006, when only five NGOs worked in the landlocked country.

UNICEF's priority areas are Health and Nutrition, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), Education, HIV/AIDS and Protection. Major achievements for UNICEF over the past three months have included:

- **Reducing maternal and child mortality;** the launch of the 2008's National Mother and Child Survival Campaign. In collaboration with the Ministry of Health and the UNFPA, UNICEF has been able to support the immunization of 686,826 women (aged 15-49) against Tetanus, giving a national coverage rate of 66%. Approximately 350,000 children also received de-worming treatment, vitamin A supplementation and basic vaccinations where necessary.
- **Preventing chronic and acute malnutrition amongst children under five;** In February, 188 under-5s, suffering from severe acute malnutrition, received assistance at four UNICEF-supported Therapeutic Feeding Centres (3 in Bangui and 1 in Bossangoa). The centres are run by the Ministry of Health in collaboration with the NGO, Action Contre La Faim (ACF). An additional 539 children under five, suffering from moderate acute malnutrition (Weight-Height ratio between 70-80%) received assistance at the UNICEF-supported Supplementary Feeding Centre in Bangui.
- **Providing emergency WASH assistance to displaced populations;** In conjunction with its partner Solidarités, UNICEF is continuing to support the 2,000 IDPs who are currently residing in Kabo. UNICEF has financed an extensive WASH project which has included the construction of 50 latrines and the rehabilitation of 2 wells.
- **Training teachers as part of the Emergency Education programme;** UNICEF has supported its partner CARITAS in the training of 403 parent teachers in Bozoum, Ngaoundaye, and Bocaranga in north-western CAR. This training forms an integral part of the Emergency Education Programme which is funded by UNICEF in order to improve access to basic education for 20,000 conflict-affected children in 135 schools across the region.
- **Promoting Women and Children's Rights;** In January, 26 community leaders in Kaga Bandoro received training on child protection issues within the Child Protection Network which was established last year. The training aimed to reinforce participants' ownership of women and children rights within their communities, especially in conflict situations, giving

them the tools to allow them to report on rights violations (including violence against children, FGM, sexual abuse and the use of child soldiers).

- **Distributing emergency Non Food Items (NFIs) to vulnerable families;** UNICEF is continuing to support Kabo's IDP camp which has currently supported 2,000 displaced persons. UNICEF, through its partner Solidarités has provided; 400 mosquito nets, 9,000 pieces of soap and 450 cooking sets

Despite the progress made over the past few months, UNICEF still faces a multitude of constraints. Although some donors have responded favourably to CAR's requests, sufficient resources have yet to be mobilised. This is something which is inhibiting UNICEF's ability to respond all of those who require assistance. The lack of external interest in the country has also led to a severe lack of field partners. It is not difficult to understand why CAR has been labelled "one of Africa's most forgotten emergencies." This situation is exacerbated by the continuing deterioration of security for children and humanitarian personnel alike. In addition, most health and educational infrastructure has been decimated and workers are often left unpaid in the northern conflict-affected prefectures. Weak governance, lack of budget support and issues with corruption severely undermine the government's capacity to provide essential public services to the poor.

Therefore, concrete mechanisms should be established for sustained dialogue and consultation between the military deployment and humanitarian actors at the field level and in the capital Bangui respectively, to ensure the coherence and effectiveness of the international effort to assist the country. The objective would be to maximize complementarities and minimize potential negative repercussions, to facilitate coordination and communication between the humanitarian community and EUFOR, and to ensure that humanitarian principles are not compromised by the presence of the Mission in north-eastern CAR.

In spite of these challenges, UNICEF retains a strong presence in the field. It is hoped that with increased funding and partnerships on the field, the organisation will be able to extend its outreach to more of CAR's most vulnerable women and children. It is to be noted

### 3. APPEAL REQUIREMENTS AND RECEIPTS

As part of the Humanitarian Action Report - UNICEF's annual appeal for children and women in emergencies - UNICEF has requested **US\$ 15,562,069**. To date, UNICEF remains critically under-resourced with only with only 5% of the needs covered.

**Table 1: Funds Received against Appeal**

Appeal Sector	Requirements by Sector (US\$)	Funds Received (US\$)	Unmet requirements (US\$)	% Unfunded
Education	1,976,529		1,976,529	100%
Health and Nutrition	7,880,940		7,880,940	100%
Water & Sanitation	2,036,550	840,350	1,196,200	59%
Protection	1,877,850		1,877,850	100%
NFI/Shelter	1,790,200		1,790,200	100%
<b>Total*</b>	<b>15,562,069</b>	<b>840,350</b>	<b>14,721,719</b>	<b>95%</b>

\*The total includes a maximum recovery rate of 7%. The actual recovery rate on contributions will be calculated in accordance with UNICEF's Executive Board Decision 2006/7 dated 9 June 2006.

UNICEF would like to express its sincere gratitude to the donors who have contributed to its emergency interventions so far and hopes that other donors will soon extend their support as well. The timely provision of resources will allow UNICEF to avoid any critical disruption in the provision of essential services and supplies, as well as to launch new important projects. Most programmes remain severely under-funded, which is undermining UNICEF's ability to improve child survival and development.

**Table 2: Urgent Priority Requirements**

<b>Project</b>	<b>Beneficiaries</b>	<b>Cost (US\$)</b>
1. Control of EPI preventable disease epidemics	468,479 under-5s and 663,452 child-bearing women	2,011,600
2. Back-to-school campaign in conflict-affected areas of CAR	113,000 conflict-affected children including 56,500 girls	1,901,529
3. Protection for orphans and other particularly vulnerable children in northern CAR	110,00 vulnerable children	214,000
4. Prevention of STI/HIV/AIDS amongst adolescents/youth in conflict-affected zones (Health)	610,574 youths (aged 15-24)	294,250
<b>Total Priority Needs</b>		<b>4,421,379</b>

Mahimbo Mdoe UNICEF Representative Bangui, Central African Republic Tel: +236 50 12 50 Email: <a href="mailto:mmdoe@unicef.org">mmdoe@unicef.org</a>	Esther Vigneau UNICEF EMOPS Geneva Tel: + 41 22 909 5612 Fax: + 41 22 909 5902 E-mail: <a href="mailto:evigneau@unicef.org">evigneau@unicef.org</a>	Gary Stahl UNICEF PFO New York Tel: + 1-212 326 7009 Fax: + 1-212 326 7165 Email : <a href="mailto:gstahl@unicef.org">gstahl@unicef.org</a>
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