

FACES I WON'T FORGET

Mia Farrow in Central African Republic



The conflict in Central African Republic (CAR) has had a devastating impact on the lives of the country's people, particularly for the children, first to suffer in any crisis. Very little has been made known to date about what is often referred to as a "forgotten" country: the downward spiral of deprivation and the deepening humanitarian crisis unfolding there.

Mia Farrow, UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador, went recently to report on the situation in the worst-affected northern regions. I was privileged to accompany her and was personally profoundly affected by what I saw of the terrible conditions confronting people.

We are heartfully grateful to Mia for her courage and determination in bearing witness on the alleged human rights abuses and suffering she observed. Here she shares with us her thoughts and feelings about the unforgettable encounters she had with CAR's people, their faces captured in a series of powerful portraits.

Through these images we are offered an important opportunity to engage and empathize with CAR's emergency - and a chance to lend support to Mia's efforts promoting an end to hostilities and the restoration of peace across this entire troubled region.



Esther Guluma
Regional Director
UNICEF West and Central Africa

“With knowledge
comes responsibility...”



Mia Farrow

Mia Farrow
UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador

The Children's Ward, Bangui Hospital

Amelie is 12 and she has been diagnosed with a cancer that's curable if money could be found for the drugs she desperately needs. Without them, only the miracle she is praying for can make her well now.



Voix du Coeur Centre for Street children, Bangui

Such singing, such music and clapping from hundreds of children gathered at the Centre. It's open every day to give food, medical advice and training to the ever-increasing numbers living on Bangui's streets – more than 3000 now. Seeing this boy though, so reserved and sad amid the celebration, made me think about how harsh and brutalizing their life is.....





Mbata, Lobaye

In the forest clearing there must have been 100 Aka Pygmies greeting us. This little girl was one of many who looked sick, especially with skin diseases. I heard they can't afford the medicines they need and anyway, fear discrimination if they go to a doctor. This marginalization has to change.





Markounda

Flavien – Today I saw you on that bed at the Medecins sans Frontieres clinic and learned what happened to you. How you've been living hidden in a bush shelter with your family, how one night, asleep by the fire lit to keep you warm and keep away the wild animals, you rolled over and got these terrible burns. Your face spoke of such pain. They say you'll heal ok, given time....I wish you the courage to bear it, the strength to pull through.



On the road to Paoua

This woman with the wise old face was one of 300 people who just appeared out of the bush when we stopped: they were like spectres, caked in dust, emaciated, wearing rags. They have no blankets, their children are dying and they are terrified of more attacks. The mayor told me, "This conflict has reduced us to living like animals."





On the road to Paoua

A young man like this one has known nothing but violence all through his growing up - and so I suppose now he feels his future can only be secured through the barrel of a gun.



Boguila

Just catching sight of the expressions of these two young boys tells me they've seen and been through things children shouldn't have to suffer. I wonder what future they can hope for if peace isn't restored soon to their community, their country?



Bossangoa

For me, this face captures the impending tragedy in CAR. The face of conflict and poverty - where a child becomes severely malnourished even though there would be plenty to eat if only there were peace. Violence perpetrated with impunity, all the progress made over the years in health care and education just unraveling, and so little being done to break the pattern, relieve the despair.....





“We all bear a responsibility to try and shed light on this immense human suffering”





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