

**INTER-AGENCY MISSION REPORT ON THE
CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC
CARE INTERNATIONAL
NORWEGIAN REFUGEE COUNCIL
WORLD VISION
FEB 10-17, 2007**



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ACRONYMS

ACF	Action contre la faim
APRD	L'Armée populaire pour la Restauration de la République et la Démocratie
CAP	Consolidated Appeal Process
CAR	Central African Republic
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
COOPI	Cooperazione Internazionale
ECHO	European Commission for Humanitarian Aid
EU	European Union
FACA	Forces armées centrafricaines
FOMUC	Force multinationale en Centrafrique
GAPLC	Groupe patriotique pour la Libération de Centrafrique
GP	Garde présidentielle
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	Internally Displaced Populations
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IRC	International Rescue Committee
MLCJ	Armée des Libérateurs centrafricains pour la Justice
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OFDA	Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance
RCA	République centrafricaine
UFDR	L'Union des Forces démocratiques pour le Rassemblement
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WFP	World Food Program
WV	World Vision

A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NRC, CARE and World Vision conducted an Inter-agency assessment in CAR between 10-17 February to determine whether an emergency response was necessary in the current crisis and whether or not there would be opportunities for partnering between our organizations if a decision is made to take action. The group of nine was divided into two field teams of four each, which visited the northwest and northern central conflict zones while the assessment team leader stayed in Bangui to meet with donors, NGOs and Government authorities. The trip was intended to confirm existing assessments and reports, and based on these reports and our own observations in the field, attempt to prioritise gaps in geographic and sector coverage and then prioritise potential program options. This was not designed to be a thorough needs assessment of the potential humanitarian crisis.

The humanitarian situation in the CAR has been exacerbated over the last 18 months by the actions of rebel groups in the northwest and northeast of the country as well as the increase in the number of bandits (coupeur de routes) in the north. Fighting between rebel groups and government forces has led to the destruction of hundreds of homes, most of them burned by government forces as acts of reprisal against villages suspected of sympathizing with the rebels. Human rights abuses, including summary executions of suspected rebel sympathizers and the recruitment of child soldiers, have been many. These actions have created a climate of fear and have led to the displacement of over 200,000 people, many of them to the bush and forest where people have become even more vulnerable to disease and insecurity. This has worsened an already precarious situation brought about by years of neglect and lack of investment in basic infrastructure and services and it sets the stage for a more serious humanitarian crisis.

The United Nations has appealed for the International community to intervene. A CAP was prepared for 2007, and a request for USD 49.5 million in assistance has been presented to International donors. NGOs have been encouraged to set up emergency operations to complement existing International and local NGOs on the ground, and the UN is in the process of establishing a presence in seven of the conflict prefectures. Establishing a larger presence is part of an overall strategy to reduce insecurity and increase protection for affected villagers, but this can only have a limited and short-term impact. Despite the presence of NGOs in Paoua, for example, the security situation has recently deteriorated. Only the government can resolve the security situation, and more steps have to be taken by the International Community to ensure that the government is accountable for the protection of its people. A measurable plan needs to be put forth by the government in order to demonstrate how they will improve their oversight, reform their military and end the human rights abuses of their soldiers.

Field teams found that the situation among the displaced varied. Where villagers had the time to gather their possessions before fleeing to the bush, their situation was much better than those who had to flee without notice and lost everything. Most of the displaced moved to areas next to their agriculture fields within a few kilometres of their homes. Interviews with NGOs operating in the field and our own observations indicated that malnutrition had not yet become a serious problem although we did see some signs of severe malnutrition (there were reports of

people eating roots, wild fruits and insects). Clearly people in large numbers living out in the open with limited shelter, no latrines and little potable water were far more exposed to the risk of malaria as well as water borne diseases. It was difficult to determine the status of food stocks among the displaced, but most people interviewed had limited or very little food available. This was not a good sign since they are approaching the hunger season. Even more disconcerting was the fact that many people had had their seed stock burned in the destruction of their villages. Unless these can be replenished, they will face a far more serious humanitarian crisis over the next six months.

Thanks to efforts by the UN to highlight the plight of the displaced people in the north, many NGOs have already started, or are committing themselves to starting operations in CAR. ACF, IRC, Premiere Urgence, Solidarité and possibly Save the Children UK have all indicated their willingness to begin operations. This combined with the ongoing activities of MSF, ICRC, COOPI, CARITAS and UN Agencies on the ground, means that there are a variety of players who can respond to the current crisis. Geographically, the northwest seems to be the best covered with the north central area, from Kaga-Bondoro up to the Chadian border, experiencing a few more gaps. Only MSF was working in the northeast. Because of insecurity, difficult logistics and a relatively small population base, there was not much interest shown by other NGOs in starting operations there. Education was the one exception, where UNICEF, acting alone, had some limited operations.

Resources for many of the NGOs planning start-ups appear limited. There aren't many institutional donors willing to commit resources to support NGOs yet, and some donors have already made commitments to support the CAP. Except for OFDA, ECHO, the French Government, the Swedish Government and the German Government, there are no other donors, to our knowledge, who are ready to commit resources to NGOs. And though NGOs have access to CAP and CERF funds, these resources are limited and used primarily by the UN. Only about 25% of the recent CERF allocation is destined for NGOs. The International community must commit more resources to support the humanitarian response and the UN must ensure that a larger percentage of the CERF and CAP funds go to NGOs, who are generally more effective (less bureaucratic) in providing fast and efficient emergency response.

The influx of new NGOs has stretched the government's ability to facilitate their entry smoothly. Some NGOs have waited for more than 6 months without obtaining a basic agreement permitting them to operate in country. NGOs without government approval must pay customs taxes of up to 70% on imported material, equipment and supplies. Clearer mechanisms and protocols must be established to permit NGOs to hit the ground running, and the UN should help the government better define these mechanisms, and disseminate this to the larger NGO community.

Any NGO actor contemplating operations in CAR must be aware of the cost. Most NGOs will have to operate with a large contingent of expatriates due to a lack of qualified senior national staff. Offices will have to be set up in Bangui as well as in the operational prefecture. Vehicle rentals are between \$3,000-4,000 per month; generators and communications equipment for vehicles and offices will be essential. Logistics to the regional offices are difficult, with very bad roads, and although local truckers are available, costs for moving materiel are very high.

Some materiel and equipment is available locally but much will have to be brought in by road from Cameroon, increasing costs significantly. Any program start up, be it long or short-term, will require organizations to contribute some of their own funds.

Based on the findings of the assessment, it is recommended to consider a joint NRC, CARE, World Vision operation to be launched from Batangafo. This appeared to be the region in the North Central the least served by other NGOs. Establishing a base in Paoua was another option, but it was felt that there were already enough NGOs there, and more are promising to commit. The primary reason for establishing a presence now is to mitigate against further deterioration of the current situation and and to be able to respond if the crisis does reach serious humanitarian proportions. NRC clearly has a role to play in education/protection activities and CARE and World Vision bring strengths in Food Security, Water & Sanitation and Shelter. All three organizations have important expertise in longer term development activities which could follow a short to midterm emergency response. If any of the three organizations are not yet ready to act, then a close monitoring role to ensure that the situation doesn't get out of hand should be observed and a possible decision to intervene made if the situation deteriorates further.

Acknowledgements:

We would like to thank all those who helped coordinate our visit and took the time to share their thoughts with us. Particular thanks go to Gisele, Nicole and Daniel of OCHA who went to an enormous amount of trouble to coordinate our visits. Special thanks also to Bob Kitchen of IRC who provided logistics support in the form of a vehicle to help manage the Bangui meeting schedule. Spirit of true partnership! And Toby's driver was a gem, and deserves a promotion!

B. METHODOLOGY

Each team brought a variety of skill sets and experiences to the mission, including expertise in logistics, food security, gender, education, water & sanitation and shelter. The goal was not to do our own assessment of the humanitarian crisis, but rather confirm the assessments and reports already produced and prioritize possible programming options based on these reports and our observations in the field. One member of the team was charged with collecting data from the variety of NGOs, Donors, UN Agencies and Government entities based in Bangui.

Each field team possessed a full set of Sphere guidelines to help guide them in their evaluations. Though time was too short for more in-depth sector analysis, each team was tasked to look at food security, nutrition, water & sanitation, shelter, education, Non Food needs, logistics and health as well as looking at key protection issues, gender or child based violence. Each team was asked to meet with local authorities and government officials, conduct focus groups with key constituencies (Primarily IDPs) and hold individual interviews with as many villagers and displaced people that time would permit. At the end of each day, team members shared their impressions and one person was tasked to summarize their notes.

It should be noted that given the time constraints of the mission, and given the difficulty of obtaining concrete numbers regarding IDPs, accurate statistics on health and livelihood status as well as more specific data on sector specific strategies, the focus of the report was more on the qualitative rather than the quantitative.

C. NORTHWEST TRIP (BANGUI-BOZOUM-PAOUA-CHAD BORDER-BOSSANGOA-BANGUI)

(Rob Solem, Geoffroy Larde, Nicole Hurtubise, Joau Roque)



The team spent 6 days travelling to the Northwest (itinerary Annex A) from the 11th to the 16th of February. It should be noted that any project specific recommendations coming from the field teams should be seen as guides to help NRC, WV and CARE determine a possible course of action as well as help inform the larger humanitarian community as to programming needs. .

C.1. General Contextual Observations

a) Status of IDPs

IDPs are scattered and difficult to find. They appear to be organized in extended family groups and live close to their fields several kilometres from their village. It is difficult to determine just how many IDPs there are. Burnt villages are one of the key indicators that help track the movement of more recent IDPs.



Not all IDPs are equally vulnerable. Some, who were warned of imminent attack, managed to flee their homes with some belongings. Others, who were taken by surprise, had to abandon their possession in order to flee into the bush as they were being shot at by the GP and FACA. Some IDPs have access to basic services (such as those in Bozoum or around Paoua) while others are tens of kilometres away from health centres or schools.

Movements of IDPs also differ. Some IDPs fled into the bush, while others took refuge in towns such as Bozoum. In Bozoum, there are close to 4000 IDPs, according to the mayor, and a large number among them are Peuhls. Some IDPs have scattered on the periphery of towns,

as is the case with Paoua. The situation in general is very fluid, making it difficult to get an accurate picture of the numbers and location of many of the IDPs.

Some IDPs return to the village to get water, to go to church on Sunday or to go to the few remaining markets. Others will attend mobile medical clinics (MSF) if they are told when and where to go (IDPs told us that an NGO would place a notice in the village church to let them know of upcoming distributions). Others spend their days in the village but go to the bush at night, as was the case in Taley where *the coupeurs de routes* terrorize the population. Others seldom leave the bush for fear of attacks.

b) Security

Sources of insecurity vary according to the region. Between Bozoum and Paoua, for example, the main threat is *the coupeurs de routes*. During these raids which often happen at dawn, many children have been abducted and returned only when a ransom was paid. The Bororo (Peuhls) appear to be targeted more than others since they can sell their livestock to pay the ransom. A father in Bozoum said he paid 2 million FCFA to free his 13 year old son. Mothers (as opposed to fathers), are normally the ones who approach *the coupeurs de routes* to negotiate the ransom and pay it. The men are afraid of being killed if they deal directly with the kidnapers.

When the Peuhls fled towards Bozoum, some of them arrived with the cattle they could save. As a result, there is sometimes tension between the herders and the farmers as they now have to share limited land in and around the town. Furthermore, the region of Bozoum is slowly being depleted of its cattle. This affects the economic balance of the region as the Peuhls and farmers are no longer able to trade goods as before.

It is not known exactly who *the coupeurs de route* are but they are said to be from Cameroon, Chad and RCA, and they apparently speak Arabic as well as other languages, including Bororo. (The region around Boar/west of Paoua is currently off limits to all humanitarian organizations precisely because of *coupeurs de route*. Axis – Bozoum - Bocaranga).

The **FACA and the GP** are clearly feared in the Paoua area, and on the road travelling east to Bossangoa. IDPs have spoken of retaliation against villagers after they were believed to be harbouring rebels. Horrific stories abound where the GP have shot at fleeing civilians during attacks, where young men were beaten to death or teachers were decapitated.

In the area where we travelled, **rebels** were not considered a threat by IDPs, although they were reported to be taking a ‘travel tax’ of 500 FCFA from people using public transport. In the few instances where we saw them interact with IDPs, it appeared that rebels lived in proximity to the IDPs’ communities. We were told that they were normally natives of the area, but perhaps not the precise village where they were ‘posted’.

The **FOMUC** (Force multinationale en Centrafrique) is present in Bozoum, but it does not have a reputation for moving quickly in pursuit of assailants against villages.

c) Humanitarian presence in Paoua and surrounding region

Several organizations are already present in Paoua and appear to be covering the basic needs of IDPs in the areas of health, food distribution and NFI, as well as water & sanitation. COOPI, MSF France, ICRC, CARITAS, WFP, Chadian Red Cross and Mission Catholique are all active in the area. ACF was also conducting an in-depth assessment in the area, and will share its findings by early March.

C. 2. Observations by sector

a) Food security and livelihood

Food security obviously varies per region as do the coping mechanisms of communities we saw. The northwest region was traditionally the bread basket of the country, as well as an area where cotton was planted. 'C'etait le poumon economique du pays' ('the economic lungs of the country').

At this point, most humanitarian actors we spoke to (ACF, MSF, ICRC) agree that there are no significant signs as yet of severe malnutrition, although chronic malnutrition has been present in the region for years. Following are observations on factors that have had and will continue to have an impact on food security:

Although IDPs live close to their fields, the fields have not been tended regularly because IDPs may have moved about due to the insecurity. As a result, crops may have been neglected at critical times.

In some areas (Bozoum and surrounding region) where people are accustomed to using oxen for plowing fields (culture attélée), the surface prepared for planting is much smaller now because most of the oxen have been stolen. The loss of cattle has also reduced the availability of milk.

Access to market

Access to markets is extremely limited. People are afraid to travel, and some important weekly markets such as Betoko (between Paoua and the Chadian border) have now been closed. This market used to attract small and large traders from Chad, Paoua and Bozoum, amongst others. Now, people find it difficult to purchase essentials such as soap and salt for key reasons: a) Prices have risen dramatically. For example, soap has gone from 150 to 375 FCFA in one year in certain areas; b) It is too dangerous to walk/travel to the markets where markets are still held. (As a result, IDPs told us of people who buy and sell salt, soap, etc from one IDP area to another); c) Most people appear to have little currency.

Where IDPs choose to go to the market, women are the ones who go, as the men and teenage boys fear being taken for rebels by the GP or FACA. Women in Betoko, for example, say they now walk to the Chadian border (20 or so km) to sell their goods.

Food reserves and seeds

The key questions that we can't answer are:

- How long will the current food reserves last?
- Will people manage to find the seeds they need to plant?
- Will aid agencies be able to cover the gap during the lean season, if need be?

The IDP families showed us their food reserves (millet, peanuts, sorghum) which were stored in one hut, normally in large sacks piled on top of each other. The reserves we saw belonged to several families, or to a large extended family.



In Buaya (a small IDP settlement between Paoua and Bossangoa), we also saw a reserve of dried tomatoes and what appeared to be a small vegetable patch. Around Paoua, at least two extended families appeared to have grain reserves as well. Again, it is extremely difficult to assess how long such reserves will last.

The rainy season starts in April, and fields should be planted at that point. Peanuts and sesame should be harvested in July and millet by Sept/October. The lean months will most likely be June, July and August.

Where we sat with IDPs in Buaya, we were told that COOPI had already distributed food twice (maize flour, salt, sugar, rice and soy), the first time in October, the second time in February. The families were told they would be getting another food distribution. At that point, IDPs were eating ‘boule’ made from maize flour with sesame sauce. We also saw evidence of bush fruits being processed for consumption.

Access to seeds was clearly of major concern to IDPs we spoke to in all areas. Peanut seed was the scarcest.

Recommendations:

To alleviate the problem of food insecurity, especially in the near future, the following measures should be taken:

- Increase seeds and agricultural tools distribution, taking special care to cover areas not already covered by other humanitarian actors
- Support local IDPs’ settlements in preparing vegetable patches and drying vegetables where possible.
- Closer monitoring of how people will cope as the ‘hungry season’ approaches

b) Shelter



The IDPs we visited built shelter with straw (roof and walls) which in some cases apparently also served to store food reserves.

During the dry season, this type of shelter may be sufficient to protect against the wind and the sun, however during the rainy season, it will not be sufficient to protect IDPs against the

elements. IDPs we met have traditionally lived close to their fields during the agricultural season, and appear to have built the type of shelter they are used to.

We also noticed that some IDPs already had a tarpaulin that was being used to protect food reserves. Reconstruction of burnt homes will clearly be a priority when security is restored; however such is not the case at present.

Recommendations:

- Distribution of tarpaulins during the rainy season in areas where IDPs haven't already received them.
- Assess further shelter needs.
- Support to the reconstruction of houses and rehabilitation of villages when security is re-established.



c) Water & Sanitation

When we stopped in villages, we tested the water pumps to see if they worked. In most cases, they did. The current and major problem with water therefore doesn't lie in the villages but within the IDPs' settlements. There appears to be no source of potable water where IDPs live near their fields. We were shown shallows 'wells' dug by IDPs where the water is murky, stagnant and clearly not potable.

When asked why IDPs didn't return to the village to fill their jerry cans, women answered that the village was either too far, or that they feared to return because of possible attacks by the FACA or GP.

Of all the basic needs met by the humanitarian community, access to water amongst IDPs appears to be the one requiring more attention. Information on proper hygiene care is also critical.

Recommendations:

- Distribution of water purifying kits alongside an IDP awareness campaign to help IDPs have access to potable water
- Construction of adequate latrines in the bush for people still living there
- Assure hygiene / sanitation education to the population
- Distribution of water storage containers

d) Education

Education recommendations are dealt with in the 2nd field team's report.

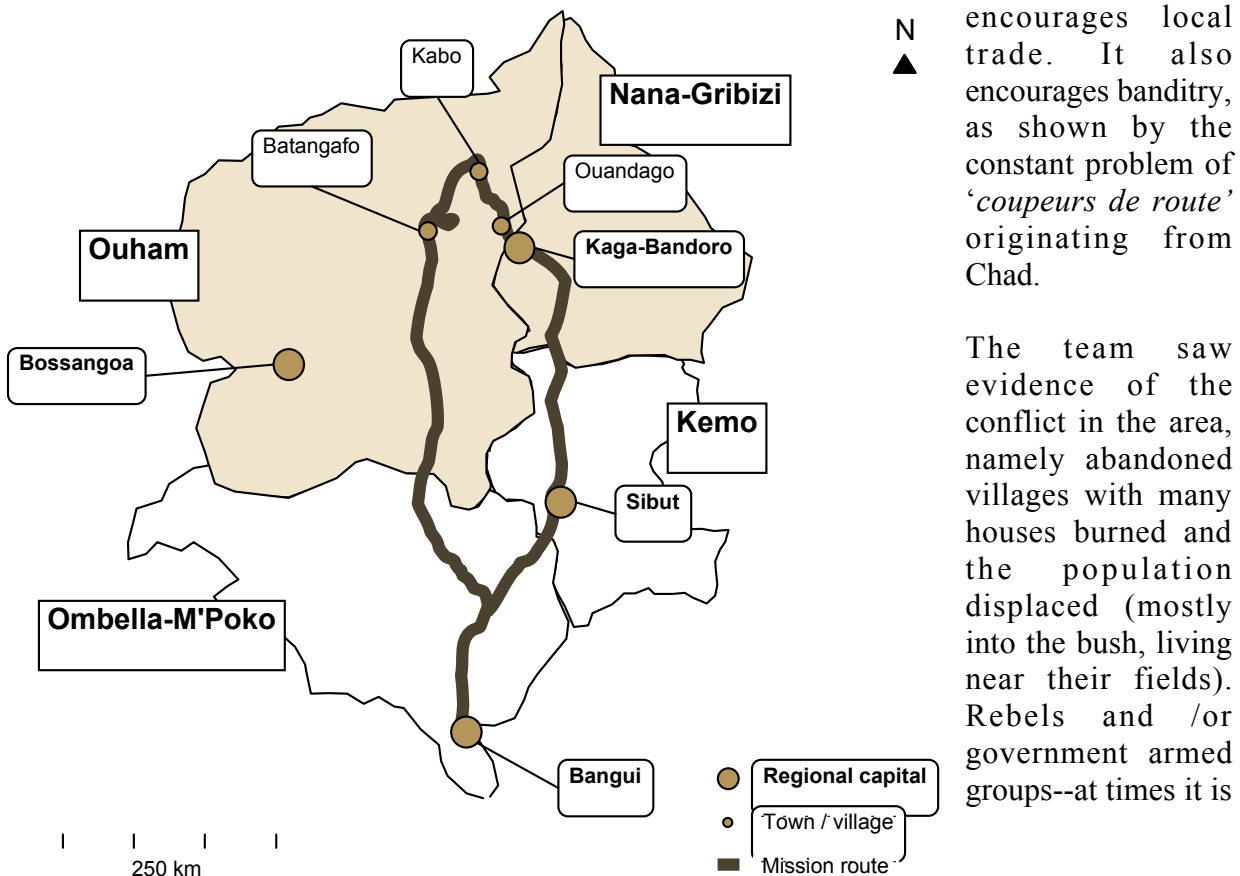
D. ROUTE TO THE BATANGAFO-KABO- KAGA BANDORO TRIANGLE

(Paul Sitnam, Mpako Folang, Gina Holmen, Loic Cohen)

The team spent 6 days travelling to this north central region (itinerary Annex B) from the 11th to the 16th of February.

D.1 General contextual observations

The Batangafo-Kabo-Kaga Bandoro triangle, located about 300 kilometres north of the capital Bangui, straddles the prefectures of Ouham and Nana Grebizi. It is mostly an agricultural area, but has commercial ties with Chad, since the 'open border' between the two countries



difficult to distinguish between the two-- live off the local population. They oblige the villagers to feed them and provide basic food. Once the government forces hear about rebels being in a certain area, they arrive at the village, accuse the villagers of being collaborators, and often burn down their houses. This has become such a common practice, that villagers flee at the sound of approaching vehicles; so much so, that many remain displaced in the bush, occasionally making forays back to their villages to see if their houses are intact or to recover goods.

Any assistance given now should be one of prevention and preparedness for potential catastrophes. This is outlined more completely in our sectoral analyses below. We want to emphasize, however, that any relief assistance should be linked to future development/sustainable programming, as this area needs more than relief assistance alone. Years of chronic underdevelopment and neglect have left the area (and its population) with little margin to successfully mitigate the effects of any disaster (human or natural). Therefore, while the focus of our mission (and that of others) has been on emergency relief, we strongly advocate that longer term, sustainable programming should also be envisaged to assist the needy populations in this area.

D.2. Observations by sector

a) Education

In the affected villages, many schools were not functioning after having been burned and looted. The children are living in the bush with their parents and have no access to education, since no schools have been established where they now live. Another problem is that teachers have not returned.

Children who have moved back to affected villages do not attend school if it means having to walk to the neighbouring village to attend classes. Parents are afraid they can be harassed by armed individuals/groups on the way, and also want to keep the children close to themselves in case of renewed danger. However, the conundrum is that at the same time parents are worried because their children presently have no access to education.

Representatives from school authorities in both Paoua (Ouham Pende) and Kaga Bandoro (Nana-Gbrizi) informed about how schooling had been disrupted during the last two years, and how schools at times had been closed for long periods. Even though many schools had been reopened January 2007, without didactic material and school equipment, as this had been stolen from most of the schools, there was a dramatic decrease in number of children attending schools and a high number of trained teachers who did not return to take up their work

Representatives from local school authorities stressed the importance of mediation with elements responsible for school disruption. "Children are innocent in this conflict, they should not suffer."

Recommendations:

In order to avoid having children in conflict affected areas miss out on more valuable schooling time, it is necessary to:

- support the Ministry of Education as soon as possible in order to further develop ways and means to reopen existing schools, where this is feasible.
- Discuss with the Ministry of Education on the procurement of learning material and on acceptance of catch-up or bridging programs to enable children to be part of the formal system.
- “bring the school to the children” either to the bush where they presently are living, or to villages where there is no school so children can attend classes close to where their parents are.

Implementation:

In cooperation with other actors in the field:

- Identify areas and villages
- Sensitize authorities, security forces, rebels, parents and children about children’s rights to attend school
- Identify and train resource persons in targeted villages in relevant subjects including teaching methodology, child rights, peace building, hygiene, and health in order to enable them to be parent-teachers aids under the supervision of a qualified teacher,
- Improvise and create makeshift schools (pilot schools) in the bush or in smaller villages so children can attend classes close to where the parents are living
- Rehabilitate schools
- Even though it may be a response to an emergency situation, carefully plan a sufficient time frame for the project, to ensure the lasting effect of supporting and strengthening the existing school system

Displaced children cannot go to school



Findings

While talking to the displaced we found out that there is a high level of illiteracy, especially among girls. Many youths find themselves heads of households; they have little income earning capacity, especially girls' heads of households. As well, young girls and young single mothers have - with or without their consent - joined the rebels and young boys, between 13-14 years old have - with or without their consent - joined armed groups.

Recommendations

- Reinforce community protection and care mechanism for this group
- Provide youths at risk with training, life and practical skills enabling them to care and provide for themselves (and also for their children)

c) Shelter

From Batangafo to Bokamgay, many villages are half empty and half burned by the rebels; whereas from Batangafo to Kabo the majority of villages were pillaged and have houses with their roofs burned by the government's security forces and are empty (since September/October 2006). On the axis from Kabo to Ouandago, the majority of villages have houses with their roofs burned and are empty (since September/October 2006); again, it appears done by the government's security forces. The village residents live in the bush, near their fields, which are not very far from the village. Domestic animals were still evident in the villages.

From Ouandago to Kaga Bandoro, almost all villages are abandoned, the majority burned, and there were no animals around. People were definitely forced to flee their villages, probably in the last 6 to 12 months. The displaced are living in make-shift shelters or under the open sky in the bush. They have virtually nothing, as all their household goods and seed/food reserves were stolen. It was apparent that the people had a great fear of the government security forces and the rebels coming back to their villages. Due to the rebel presence, the villagers have often been punished collectively by government security forces.



Recommendations:

- Distribute tarpaulins to the displaced to enable them to face the coming raining season
- Strongly advocate with the government to issue order to its forces to stop burning houses in villages ‘suspected’ to be hosting the rebels
- Strongly advocate with the government to recognise the right to return voluntarily and provide restitution of property lost by the displaced
- Help IDPs access local materials to rebuild their homes in their villages where possible or in their area of refuge in the bush
- In the short term help IDPs access basic household items, clothing and temporary locally available shelter material (NFI distribution)

d) Gender/ Protection

The mission learned that between Batangafo and Bokamgaye, women were being harassed, and were being forced by the rebels to cook for them. There were also accounts of young girls being raped and forced to cook for the rebels between Batangafo and Kabo. As young boys and men are usually considered to be rebels by government security forces, women had to take on the responsibility of shopping, passing on messages, and fetching water--either on their own or in small groups--over long distances, as many water pumps in the area were broken down. With armed groups controlling roads between Batangafo ,Kabo and Kaga Bando, women are permanently at risk of being harassed. Elderly people, children, expectant mothers, mothers with young children and disabled people, were seen living in the bush under makeshift shelters and the open sky. There were accounts of young girls and single mothers forcibly (or with consent) taken as wives for the rebels. The risk of rape between Batangafo-Kabo and Kaga Bando is high. (The team received numerous reports from affected people, which are consistent with the reports of previous assessment missions of other agencies and of agencies operating in the country on protection issues and IHL violations.¹)

Recommendations:

- Reinforce the dissemination of the guiding principles on internal displacement among the different armed groups
- Strengthen and reinforce community structures and protection mechanisms
- Provide reproductive health education

¹ Reports include: Ocha report Northwest Donor's mission, February 1-6; IDMC report: Internal displacement in CAR: A protection Crisis; Multidisciplinary Mission to the CAR 4-11 November 2006; Interagency mission to Birao (16-23 January 2007); Human Rights Watch presentation to International Community Bangui, 17 Feb 2007

e) Health

In the area visited, the health sector was covered by MSF, who have been there for several years and know the situation well.. The Red Cross and Aide Medicale Internationale also assured some health coverage. In addition, IRC's recent assessment report focused very much on health. There is sufficient recent knowledge of health issues in the area.

The mission came across some isolated signs of severe malnutrition among the population, though it is evident that if the current situation continues, there will be more cases of malnutrition, especially as people's coping mechanisms wear down and the hunger season approaches.



At the hospital where MSF works in Batangafo, the number of sleeping sickness cases dealt with has risen rapidly, as the following table illustrates:

Year	Number of Cases Dealt With
2002	147
2003	174
2004	247
2005	292
2006	446

Staff at the hospital felt this increase was caused by more and more people staying in the bush because of the conflict, thus increasing the vectors that cause the illness.

In general, health problems noted in the displaced population include malaria (mainly in the wet season) diarrhoeal related diseases and respiratory infections. Once again, if the provision of food and assurance of an uninterrupted agricultural campaign are not forthcoming malnutrition will rise, as well as incidences of disease linked to malnutrition.

Recommendations:

- Nutritional surveys, especially geared to children, should be started as soon as possible; and the nutritional status of the population closely monitored- reinforce health structures and provision of resources (medicines)-especially those of primary health care-and facilitate access by the population to these health centres (fixed or mobile); as they have no money (medical help should be free of charge)
- Assure vaccination coverage for the population at risk
- Health and hygiene education for the population

f) Food Security

The ‘triangle’ (see above in introduction for description of this triangle) we looked at during our mission is a chronically under-developed area and has suffered from the effects of conflict as far back as 2002/03. The population is still suffering from the effects of this earlier conflict, which has eroded their capacity to cope with these types of shocks. And now, the recent conflict that started in November of 2006 has again resulted in people fleeing from their villages to the bush and thus further aggravating an already precarious food security situation.

This forced displacement has made food production and its provision more irregular, giving rise to nutritional problems to an already weakened population. The constant instability and uncertainty as regards security (from the rebel and government side) puts the population between a rock and a hard place. Agricultural production is gravely hindered; many planted areas were set on fire and destroyed, as well as harvested crops, seed and food stocks. The lack of any surplus stock for sale (especially to buyers from neighbouring countries, like Chad) has added to the population’s financial woes, and generally helped to make the economy one based on barter rather than on cash. Also, the lack of labour for agriculture- and the weakened state of any available labour-do not augur well for the upcoming agricultural season’s production levels.

The planting season starts in April/May and the harvest runs from August to December/January. During the 2006 planting season, the population was already encountering difficulties in obtaining seeds. The types of crops normally cultivated in this area are: maize, manioc, millet, bean, sorghum and peanuts. Cotton was grown as a cash crop, but people in the area say they have not been paid for the crop of 2002. In certain areas we saw beans and peanuts being grown, and some vegetable gardens, using water from wells or hand pumps.

However, food prices for basic goods in the Kabo market have been steady for about a month; the problem is that people are afraid to come out of the bush (they send the women to market, because if it is the men going to town, they will be harassed by the government security forces).

The above was re-emphasized by M. Ngate Moise, the Chef de Secteur Agriculture in the Prefecture of Nana Grebizi. The people cannot cultivate and harvest normally due to the conflict. Also, since many crops have been burned, and seed stocks destroyed, there will not be much planting material left over for the upcoming agricultural campaign in May. Also, besides food and seed stocks being destroyed, tools were also lost/destroyed. He agreed that a seeds and tools intervention- with some seed protection food- would be needed soon.

Solidarite is doing some food security work-along with the FAO-along the axes of Batangafo-Kabo and Kabo-Ouandago. They will not-for the time being-do the axis Batangafo-Ouandago and Croisement Moissala. Their water projects will also follow the same axes. In the areas they are working, the harvest for 2006 has been reasonable; Kabo is historically an agricultural area. Solidarite will also do some food distributions in the 'hungry season', but this is a temporary palliative. The population still has some food to eat, but they are reaching the end of their coping strategies (already weakened after years of conflict in the area):

- Honey production
- Mangoes and citrus fruits (mangoes will be available in March)
- Wild roots and grains
- Some domesticated animals (pigs, goats)
- Bush meat
- Fishing
- Relatives in town

Recommendations:

To alleviate the problem of food insecurity, especially in the near future, we recommend:

- Increase in seeds and agricultural tools distribution, taking special care to cover areas not being worked in by Solidarite.
- Reinforce storage mechanisms
- Closer monitoring of how people will cope as the 'hungry season' approaches

g) Water and Sanitation



The area under review is well provided with rain as well as surface water (rivers, streams); we observed a number of local wells. In some of the villages we visited, there were working hand pumps (drilled to about 15 meters; these were installed by the government and UNICEF in 1987), and the water was of good quality. However, a good number of them had hand pumps in need of repair/maintenance.

The forced displacement of the population has obliged them to use water from unclean sources. This was especially noticeable where people had fled to the bush (to be near their fields) and were using unclean water from nearby sources. The broken hand pumps also force people to use unclean sources of water. There was a marked lack of knowledge by these people on basic hygiene and water use. The poor quality drinking water has probably weakened the people even further via parasites and other water borne ailments; this can be especially acute with children.

We did not see much evidence of latrines in the villages. In the bush, where IDPs have been hiding, latrines are basically non-existent. Sanitation needs are taken care of in the bush, close to the temporary shelters the people live in.

Solidarite in Kabo will do water, pump repair, sanitation/latrines, and do hygiene education and promotion) on the axes: Batangafo – Kabo and Kabo – Ouandago. They will not, for the time being, do Batangafo- Ouandago (west-east). Also, they will not do the axis Croisement Moisala to the NW.

Recommendations:

- Evaluate the condition of hand pumps and repair/provide maintenance to those pumps in need
- Training of the local population in the use and care of hand pumps; formation of community water committees
- Evaluate the condition of latrines in use, and repair those needing it
- Build adequate latrines in the bush for people still living there
- Provide hygiene / sanitation education to the population
- Distribute water storage containers

h) Non Food Items

With conflict in the area for the past five years, the affected population has lost most of its basic household goods. Since they have not been able to cultivate regularly (which is the main form of subsistence and some cash income), they have not been able to replace these goods.

The Red Cross will soon distribute thousands of NFI kits (blankets, plastic sheeting, etc) to 60,000 people in the area. This is another sector where more assistance will be needed.

Recommendations:

Upon further assessment of needs in NFIs, the following could be distributed in areas where needed:

- clothes and shoes
- soap
- salt
- blankets
- plates and cooking utensils
- buckets/ jerry cans
- mosquito nets
- water purifying tablets

E. PART OF A LARGER DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGE

The current situation has been aggravated by recent events (Please see excellent background piece prepared by IDMC in Annex E) but even without the violence and large numbers of internally displaced, the general situation for most of CAR would still be dismal.

(see social & health indicators below). Successive governments have for over 30 years failed to invest in basic infrastructure and services for its rural populations making it one of the poorest countries in the world. As seen by the lack of International NGOs working in CAR, only COOPI and ICRC were present in the CAR before the recent conflict created thousands of IDPs, so there have been very few partners on the ground working with the government to tackle long term problems of sustainable development.

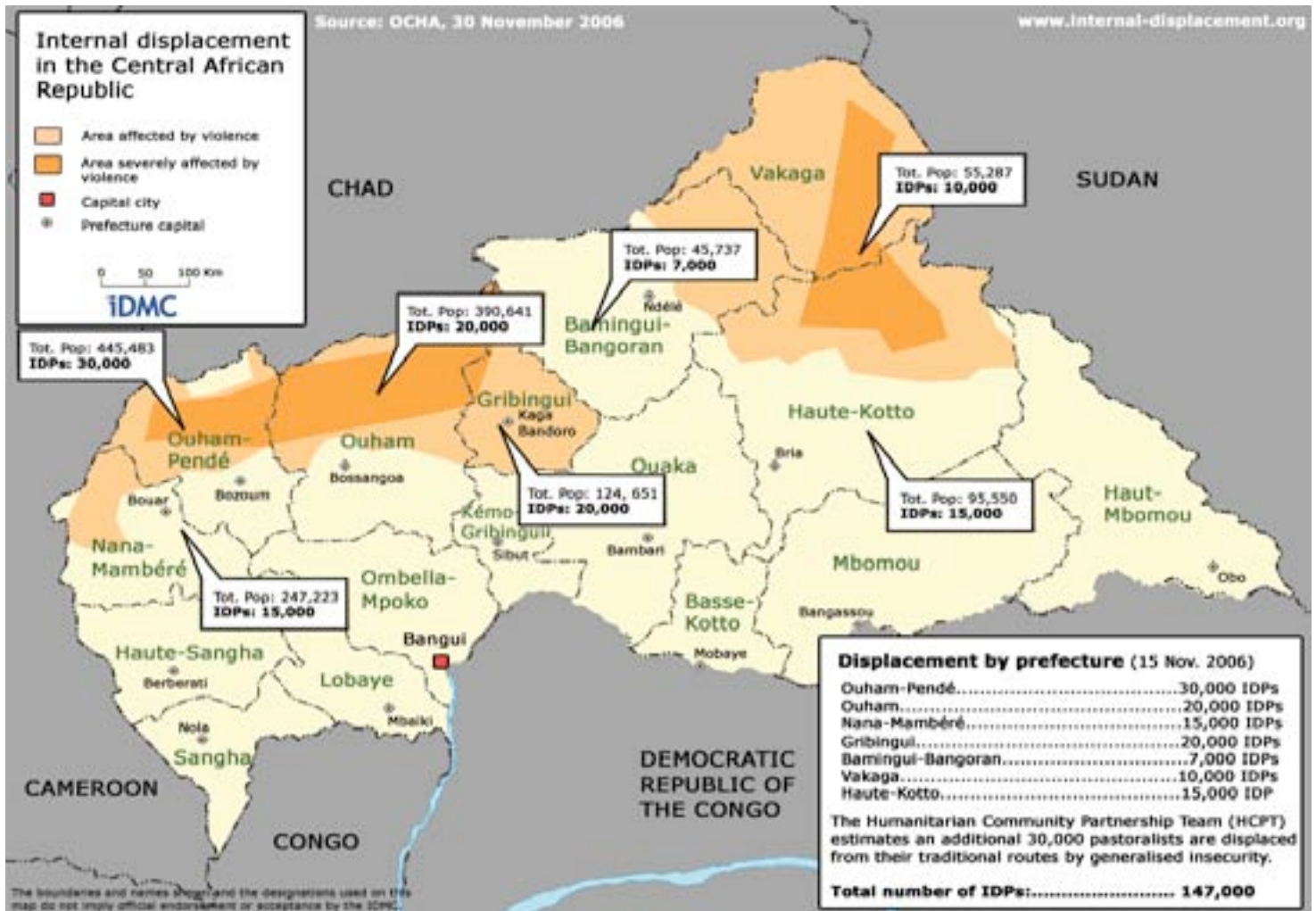
Social and development indicators

- Stands as the sixth least developed country on earth (172 out of 177 countries), 2006 UNDP's Human Development Index
- Chronic malnutrition stands at 30 % in the affected areas
- Life expectancy dropped from 48.7 years in 1988 to an estimated 41 years in 2007
- Vaccination coverage for diseases transmissible during childhood stands at under 50%
- In 2003, maternal mortality stood at 1,355 per 100,000 (compared to 510 in the Republic of Congo, and 590 in the Sudan)
- Infant mortality stood in 2003 at 132/1000, under-five mortality is estimated at 220/1000 in 2003
- 300,000 children have been cut off from further education
- Highest HIV / AIDS prevalence in the sub-region, estimated at 15%
- 30% prevalence of malaria
- Staple crop production (cassava, sorghum, corn, groundnut and rice) has dropped by 40% compared to pre-crisis production

For those now displaced, the current crisis has extended their already stretched coping mechanisms to the breaking point, and if the current situation of instability persists, and if as reports indicate that many farmers do not have the seeds to plant for the upcoming rainy season are true, we will be looking at a more serious humanitarian situation. This situation will have to be monitored closely.

F. INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE

The attached map (prepared by IDMC) shows where most of the displaced are estimated to be located. And another 70,000 have fled the country to either Chad or Cameroon. These are estimates as it is very difficult to gather accurate data when many of the displaced people are in the bush where access is very difficult. Most of the IDPs are located in the Northwest, where the population is densest. And the situation has aggravated over the last 2 months with thousands of additional people (UN estimates as many as 50,000 more have become internally displaced) leaving their homes due to the violence around Paoua during the month of January.



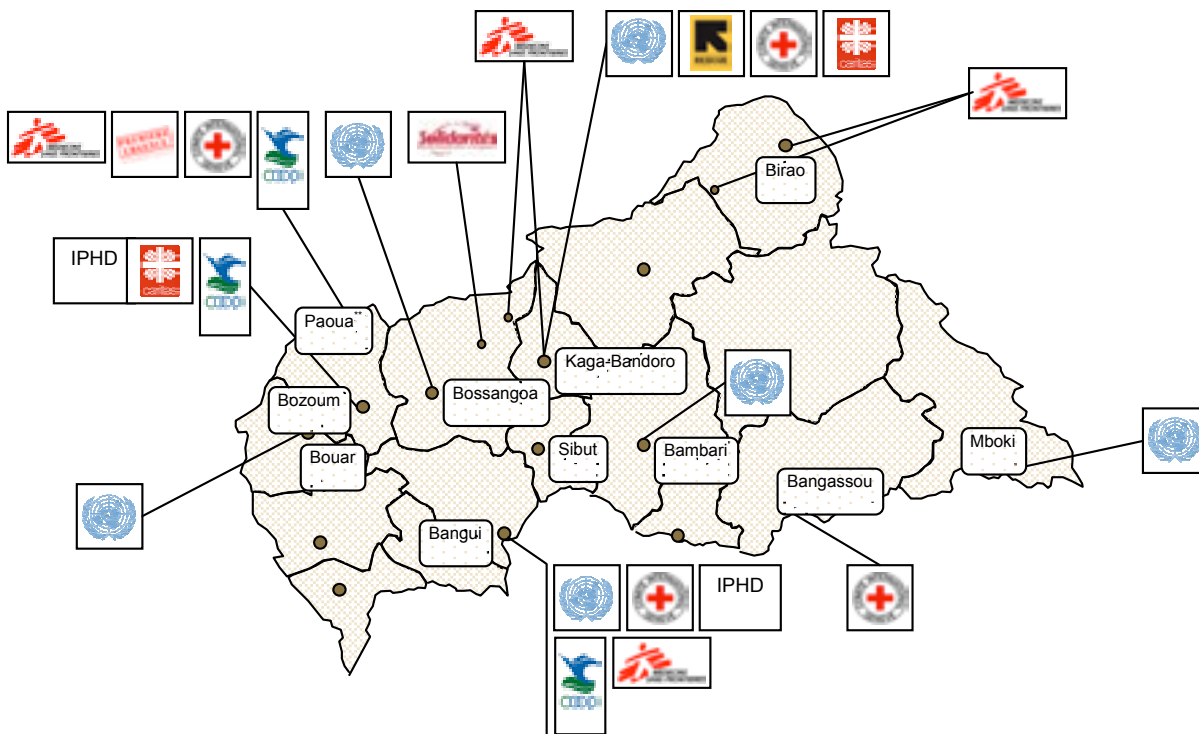
The situation of IDPs in CAR is particular to the context. These are not people who have lost their homes and are congregating in large camps where they can receive health care, water, food and shelter. These are families or extended family groups who have left their homes, either because they were destroyed or because they are afraid to live in their homes, and have moved near to their agriculture fields. These fields may be anywhere from up to 10 kilometres from their home, have limited shelter and usually no potable water source.

Villagers who retained some of their household items, food and seed before their house was torched are relatively better off than those who lost everything in the fire. And the situation does vary.

But most of these people are within reach of the main road next to their village and can be organized for vaccinations, receiving basic health care, food and NFI distributions and many of them come back to their village daily for water and other needs. They then return to the fields for the evening where they feel safer. Given their proximity to their homes and the fact that many have merely abandoned their homes out of fear, reintegrating these people back into their villages would be a fairly simple task once stability could be ensured.

G. NGO AND UN COVERAGE OF CONFLICT ZONES

Below is the most recent map (prepared by OCHA) showing where organizations are working. From six NGOs working in country six months ago, there are now 15 working. OCHA is trying to promote a cluster strategy, regrouping activities around protection, health, water & sanitation, food security and education in key Provincial capitals in the conflict zone. This larger presence of NGOs and UN agencies also serves their protection/security by increased presence strategies. Increased presence will certainly have a positive impact on insecurity in the affected areas. It will also increase the level of coverage and reporting on the impact of the conflict on the population. But as seen by the recent troubles in Paoua, the effect is mostly short term and the key is getting the government to be more accountable for managing its territories.



If the commitments made by organizations on this map come true, then there will be fairly comprehensive coverage of the UN's cluster strategy in the Northwest. Except for education, where only NRC has expressed interest; health, water & sanitation and food security are being covered by MSF, ACF, ICRC, COOPI, CARITAS, possibly Save the Children and Premiere Urgence. WFP has an office in Paoua and OCHA is planning on establishing one. UNICEF intends to send staff to its office in Bossangoa.

The one area in the Northwest not covered is an area west of Bouar to Bocaranga. But this area is frequented by a heavy presence of the *Coupeur de Routes* and most humanitarian organizations, including COOPI and ICRI, have reduced their activities in this area recently due to insecurity.

The North Central zone has a few players. IRC is setting up operations in Kaga Bandoro and they are being joined by Solidarité and an expanded ICRC program. MSF has been providing health care in the region as well. That leaves the triangle Botangafu-Kabo-Ouandago as a possible program zone and given the number of IDPs in the area, the lack of NGOs and the potential for programming closer to the Chadian border, it looks like a potential area of interest.

The UN is making a strong case for NGOs moving to the Northeast and basing themselves in Birao. This was the scene of fighting a few months back when the French Army and FACA (Government forces) repelled UFDR from the area. Only MSF is currently working there and OCHA is planning to open an office. This will probably be the seat of about 200 multi dimensional UN forces, if the UN Resolution 1706 which provides for the moving of forces to Birao and the Southern Chadian border is implemented.

The force in Birao would be primarily to prevent Chadian rebels from entering into Southern Chad after sneaking through Southern Sudan, and although it would provide some security in Birao itself, it would probably have little impact in the Northeast where most of the 10,000 IDPs are located. Given the poor logistics in trying to reach the IDPs, the security concerns in the region and the relatively small population, this area would not be recommended for setting up initial operations in country.

H. CHANCES FOR PEACE

The recent Tripoli Peace Treaty between the Government of CAR and Miskine, the rebel leader of the FDC, one of the UFDR factions in the northeast, gave rise to some initial optimism that things might be moving forward. When the other two leaders of the UFDR immediately responded that this did not include them, this hope was quickly dashed. The rebel faction in the northwest (APDR) was apparently not involved with these discussions at all. Yet there is at least a process of negotiation that has started and the Government seems to be eager to enter into dialogue.

Rebel Factions

UFDR: L'Union des Forces Democratique pour le Rassemblement in northeast

- Front Democratique Centrafricain (FDC)
- Groupe d 'Action Patriotique pour la Liberation de Centraqfrique (GAPLC)
- Mouvement des Libérateurs Centrafricains pour la Justice (MLCJ)

APRD : L'Armee Populaire pour la Restauration de la Republique et la Democratie in northwest

The International community seems eager to support the government as well. Recent approval of an operating agreement between the IMF/World Bank and the CAR is a positive sign. Recent budgetary support from the French government has permitted the Central African Government to pay its civil servants as well as the army and police. There is talk of debt relief this summer if continued economic improvements are made. The United States is upgrading its mission to a full US Embassy in the summer.

Unfortunately, given the plethora of rebel factions, civil defence groups and armed gangs, it is difficult to determine with whom the government should be negotiating and how to bring the generalized insecurity in the North to an end. This is further exacerbated by the fact that the Presidential Guard and FACA, the regular army, are behind most of the burnings and killings in the conflict areas. The government must do more to control its armed forces, respect human rights and set in place an accountable and measurable process which would demonstrate its seriousness in reigning in its armed forces. The International Community must do more to hold the government accountable.

I. SECURITY FOR HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATIONS

Though there have been reports of threats to humanitarian organizations, to date there have been no serious incidents (recent Paoua incident with COOPI an exception) involving International Aid Workers. Rebel groups have publicly stated that they will not interfere with humanitarian actions as long as they are informed of movement in their controlled areas in advance. Most rebel leaders have radios and can be contacted by the UN or International organizations if required. What they don't want to see are armed escorts for humanitarian or UN workers and this criteria for travel in the rebel held areas was recently dropped by the UN. Contacting rebel leaders for any proposed visit, clearly marking your vehicles with the insignia of your organization and travelling with no armed soldiers are essential. If going out in rebel controlled areas for the first time, it is certainly recommended to go under a UN flag. They can make the necessary contacts needed to ensure safe passage. If working in a rebel controlled area, the organization will have time to make the needed contacts and develop the necessary relationships to avoid problems.

Problems with the local bandits (*coupeur de routes*) are more unpredictable. These armed gangs of up to 50 people give no guarantees that they will not steal or interfere with humanitarian relief activities. In areas where they are active and where there is no large rebel or government presence, it is not recommended to work unless these bandits have been cleared. This is currently the case in the area west of Bouar-Bocaranga.

J. LOGISTICS/COSTS

The complicated logistics, long distances to regional capitals over poor roads, lack of basic infrastructure and high cost of imported material and equipment make setting up operations in the CAR quite a challenge. There is virtually no electricity outside the capital, banks only have a main office in Bangui with no branches in the regional capitals and most roads are not paved (some are virtually impassable during the rainy season) lacking basic bridges and culverts which make transport even more challenging. Trucking costs to the field offices will be high, though there are private contractors available to provide trucking services.

This will require any organization ready to respond in the conflict areas to establish a logistics office in Bangui to support their operations in the field. Renting a 4-wheel drive costs up to \$3,500/month. Any field operations will require generators and substantial communications equipment for vehicles and offices. Housing is relatively cheap if it can be found. Most offices or housing will have to be renovated by the organization itself and the costs deducted from the rent. Internet services are irregular and expensive and apparently taxes on setting up a VSAT system are very high. Good quality senior local staff will be extremely difficult to find which means most organizations bringing in expatriates for their short-term emergency operations. International NGOs can recover part of these start-up costs from potential donors but will have to be ready to cover some of these costs with their own institutional funds.

K. DONOR INTEREST

The call for International organizations to respond has not yet attracted the resources needed to support additional emergency operations. Though a CAP appeal has been launched, seeking \$49.5 million in aid, most of this money will go to the UN, not to cover NGO costs and activities. Supporting CAP appeals is one way International Donors respond to emergency requests, but this means less direct aid to NGOs from these same sources. CERF funds have been approved for this year but apparently only 25% of the \$4.0 million approved will go to NGOs. There have been clear indications of interest from some donors to support emergency activities through NGOs; OFDA recently allocated USD 2 million to support seeds and tools, albeit through UN mechanisms since there was limited NGO presence on the ground. And ECHO, the French government and Swedish government are currently requesting proposals from NGOs.

The EU has announced a large rural development project (80 million Euro) to be financed with the 10th FED funds, but this will not begin until 2008 and will not address emergency response activities. So unless an NGO has large reserves of its own or can launch a quick appeal among its private donor base, the money being promised to date will not go far in responding to this current crisis. The International community must mobilize more resources to support humanitarian operations in the CAR and the UN should make more of their CERF and CAP funds available to NGOs on the ground.

L. LIST OF ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Northern CAR is a chronically underdeveloped area, suffering from years of conflict, and the population's margin for coping with the deleterious effects of the recent conflict is becoming more and more fragile.
- If measures are not brought about to bring peace to the area, stop the violence and end the 'fear factor' that has embedded itself in the majority of the population living in the area, then the likelihood of a full blown emergency developing in the conflict zones is high.
- Government and rebels should remove the "fear factor" by issuing clear orders to their forces to respect international humanitarian law and human rights law and end attacks and abuses against civilians.
- Security and protection in key towns in the conflict area can be enhanced in the short term by NGOs and UN agencies establishing a presence, but the overall security situation can only be resolved by the government, taking full responsibility for governance of its territory and the sustainable recovery of its population.
- The United Nations and International Organizations must do more to ensure that the Government of CAR has a measurable and accountable plan for ensuring the country's stability.
- The priority sector for support is protection, followed by food security, water and sanitation, health, shelter and education (where there is probably the biggest gap between potential implementing partners). In the food security sector, the priority activity is providing farmers with seeds and tools to ensure they can plant their fields in time for the upcoming rainy season.
- The United Nations must ensure that more of the CAP and CERF funds go to NGOs who have more of a comparative advantage in quick emergency response activities. International donors must also contribute more resources to the efforts by NGOs on the ground. The call by the United Nations for action to avert a larger humanitarian crisis has been heard but resources must be available to finance these operations.
- Mechanism for facilitating the entry of NGOs into CAR are not clear and some NGOs have waited more than 6 months for approval to start activities. As exemption from paying import duties and taxes depends upon having this approval, NGOs have had to pay up to 70% tax on their imported humanitarian goods while waiting for this approval to go through. Clear protocols must be established to ensure that organizations can hit the ground running with a clear government commitment to support them. The UN could help tremendously in influencing the government to establish these mechanisms

M. SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CARE, NRC, WORLD VISION

- It is recommended that CARE, World Vision and Norwegian Refugee Council start up an emergency operation in Batangafo.² Based on our field visit, there are needs in education, water & sanitation, food security, NFIs and shelter that need addressing, yet there are only a limited number of NGOs and UN agencies currently responding to the Batangafo-Kabo-Ouandago Triangle and northwest of Batangafo. Responding now, in an environment which will in all likelihood get much worse over the next 6 months, would position us to help prevent a potentially much larger humanitarian crisis later. It is also understood that each of our respective organizations has an interest in doing long term programming in the CAR, tackling the real causes of poverty and underdevelopment that have plagued the country for years. Establishing a presence now would make it possible, if the conditions were right and longer term funding was available, to pursue this goal. We propose using a comprehensive programming approach for the emergency and mitigation response activities, bringing in resources through our various funding sources to respond to the variety of identified needs. Actions and proposals would have to be well coordinated to avoid duplication.
- A small logistics office should be established in Bangui to support our program in Batangafo. Each institution will have to decide whether they would want to share this office space in Bangui or open up separate offices. Initially, it would probably be wise to join forces and share costs but eventually, if the security situation stabilizes and longer term development opportunities expand, each organization would probably want to have their own main office in the capital. This would not however prevent us from expanding into other areas of the CAR with a similar joint programming approach.
- There are risks in setting up for the short term with plans for longer term programming in an insecure environment like CAR. Without security and stability in the north, long term development activities will not be possible. If, given these circumstances, the political will to invest resources in mission start-up is lacking, then another option would be to wait for a few months until the political and security situation becomes clearer. Though acting now would probably put organizations in a better position with the donor and UN community, most of the longer term funding won't be available until later so this should not limit our access to these longer term funds.
- If the decision is made not to intervene immediately, then our respective organizations should at least closely monitor the situation in CAR to determine if the situation is stabilizing or deteriorating, so that they can be in a position to quickly respond if necessary. If we have overestimated the capacity of existing NGOs to respond to the crisis; if the instability continues displacing more and more people; and if the number of people unable to plant a crop this year is significantly higher than anticipated, then there would be a clear mandate to immediately respond.

² This recommendation is provided under the caveat that sufficient funding is secured to cover operational start-up costs and to sustain operations for a mid-term period (min. 6-9 months) and that other internal start-up/entry requirements of the respective organization can be met.

- The second option for a possible intervention would be in Paoua, although if the NGOs currently considering starting a program there actually come through with their commitment, then there might be little need for additional NGOs. Paoua is strategically close to the Chadian border for possible cross-border programming, has a high population base, is close to a large number of IDPs, will have OCHA and WFP offices and is located in the agriculture centre of the country. A comprehensive program similar to what has been proposed for Batangafo would be used.
- If a decision is taken to seriously consider program start up, then it is recommended that each organization send someone to Bangui for up to a month in order to conduct a more thorough assessment of the possible project zones, explore logistical requirements (office space, vehicle, etc.), prepare more specific project proposals for potential donors and begin talks with the government of CAR about getting a country agreement. . If after one month it was clear that there was insufficient interest by donors in supporting our operations and that the only money available would come from our own limited resources, then we could still decide to not proceed and simply maintain the monitoring role described above.

ANNEX A: Itinerary North West Team

Partial Report for CAR Assessment: Western Team (Bangui-Paoua-Bossanguoa-Bangui)

By Nicole Hurtubise

1 - Itinerary covered by the Western Assessment Team:

Sunday 11th

Travel Bangui to Bezoum

- Conversation with one family of IDPs of Bororo origin
- Conversation with mayor of town
- Conversation with CARITAS

Monday 12th

- Travel from Bezoum to Paoua
- Stop in Taley village (45 km north of Bozoum) and discussion with the mayor and a small group of other villagers.
- Meeting in Paoua with ACF (Action contre la Faim) on food security

Tuesday 13th

- Travel to Chadian border south of Gore
- Stop in Betoko village (market town) 45 km north of Paoua towards the Chadian border. Conversation with a group of 15 women from this village.
- Stop in Bemal village (54 km north of Paoua). Conversation with a group of 5 or 6 women (all IDPs) who were waiting in line to have their babies vaccinated.
- Return to Paoua
- Meeting with MSF France in Paoua

Wednesday 14th

- Travel east of Paoua on road to Boguila.
- Stop in abandoned village Buaya 45 km east of Paoua. Meeting with rebels and 'bush walk' to meet residents of Buaya village.
- Stop in abandoned village name Debora and brief conversation with two members of self-defense militia.
- Return to Paoua.
- 'Bush walk' in areas surrounding Paoua where IDPs from Paoua neighborhoods have taken refuge.

Thursday 15th

- Meeting with ICRC
- Meeting with CARITAS
- Travel from Paoua to Bassanguoa (6 hours)

Friday 16th

- Travel from Bassanguoa to Bangui

ANNEX B: Trip Itinerary North Center

North Center Team (Bangui-Batangafu-Kabo-Ouandago-KaPaoua-Bossanguoa-Bangui)

By Mpako Foaleng

1 - Itinerary covered by the North Center Team:

Sunday 11th

Travel Bangui to Batangafu

Monday 12th the in Batangafu

- Conversation with the sous-préfet of town
- Conversation with MSF Spain/Belgium
- Conversation with chef du centre hospitalier
- Travel to Bokamgaye
- Stop in Ngapele village (14 km from Batangafu), discussion with the chief of the village, villagers and the school master
- Stop in Palè village, discussion with the chief of the village and his advisers, villagers, ‘bush walk’ to see and discuss with IDPs
- In Bokamgaye met with villagers and the chief
- Return to Batangafu
- Conversation with MSF Spain/Belgium person from Kabo

Tuesday 13th

- Travel to Kabo
- Stop in Roberenga village, conversation with rebels, groups of IDPs women, adolescents and children who came to fetch water
- Stop in Kava village empty, photos taken
- Stop in abandoned Ngonkira village, conversation with rebels and few IDPs
- Stop in abandoned Mirao, brief conversation with rebels
- In Kabo conversation with the sous-préfet, the Directeur d’école des garçons, Solidarité, Caritas humanitarian monitor

Wednesday 14th

- In Kabo, conversation with the directeur de l’école des filles, an IDP father whose son was taken and killed by the FACA
- Travel to Kaga-Bandoro
- Stop in abandoned village Kpetene, brief conversation with one person
- Stop in abandoned Zoumaga village, conversation with IDPs who came to fetch water (chief and his advisers, women and men)
- Stop in Ouandago market, brief conversation with rebels and some residents
- In Kaga-Bandoro, meeting with ICRC, IRC, Solidarité

Thursday 15th

- Meeting with the préfet, Inspecteur académique, chef the centre d'agriculture of Nana-Grébizi
- Visited mid-mission station , conversation chief of the station, with IDPs women and children

Friday 16th

- Travel from Kaga-Bandoro to Bangui

ANNEX C:

Contact list

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ANNEX D: Bangui Contact Meetings

WITH DONORS, NGOS, UN AGENCIES AND REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GOVERNMENT

February 12, 2007

9:30 AM: Daniel Augstburger, OCHA Head of Office a.i., and incoming OCHA Head
12:00 PM: Bob Kitchen, Responsible for IRC Set Up
2:00 PM: Nicole Henze, Head of Mission, MSF Holland

February 13, 2007

8:00 AM: Marco Cordero, Mission Representative COOPI
9:00 AM: Diane Duffour, Head of Mission ACF
10:00 AM: Bruno Geddo, UNHCR Representative
11:00 AM: Lea Doumta, Counselor to the President
12:00 PM: Peter Weinstabel, German Consul
3:00 PM: Joan Le Coz, Head of Premiere Urgence
4:00 PM: Marc Duval, Attache de Cooperation, French Embassy

February 14, 2007

10:00 AM: Alfonso Verdu, Head of Mission MSF Spain
11:00 AM: Fabrice Boussalem, UNDP, Section Crisis Prevention
3:00 PM: Guyllain Demba, Technical Officer, OMS
4:00 PM: Christophe Duhait, MSF France

February 15, 2007

9:00 AM: Jean-Nicolas Marti, ICRC Head of Mission
10:00 AM: Mahimbo Mdoe, UNICEF Representative
11:00 AM: Dominique Ferretti, WFP Head of Program
12:00 PM: James Panos, Charge D'Affaires A.I, US Embassy
Alan Dwyer, USAID Regional Advisor, OFDA
2:30 PM: Mai Moussa Abari, FAO Representative
4 :00 PM : Dr. Kosh-Komba Michel, Secretary General, ASSOMESCA

February 16, 2007

9:00 AM: Serge Bremaud, Belgian Consul
10:00 AM: Medard Jasmin Gouaye, Global Fund Coordinator
12:00 PM: Jean-Claude Esmieu, EU Ambassador, Head of the Delegation
Lauraine Comard, Program officer

February 17,2007

11:30 AM: Manus Carlquist, Head of Corporation, Swedish Embassy

ANNEX E: Background

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 kept the country from appearing on the UNDP's Human Development Index as one of the world's poorest countries during the last few years.

The state has been unable to consolidate its institutions for nearly half a century, and 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.³

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.

³ UN SG report, 15 July 1999, paras.3-8; 14 January 2000, para.21.

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.⁴ 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 2005.⁵

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.⁶

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.⁷

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.⁸ 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.

⁴ UN Human Rights Committee, 22 July 2004; ICRC, 8 July 2003.

⁵ UN OCHA, 11 November 2006, p.5; UNHCR, 13 July 2005.

⁶ IRIN, 24 May 2005; IZF, 15 March 2005.

⁷ UN SG report, 19 October 2006, para.9.

⁸ UN SG report, 27 June 2006, para.26; Reuters, 21 November 2006.

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.⁹

⁹ SC Resolution 1706, para.9 (d).

ANNEX F: Inter-Agency Scope of Work

Terms of Reference

- Purpose:** Conduct a field assessment in CAR to identify extent of humanitarian crisis and realistic options for humanitarian response and provide clear recommendations to the international community and humanitarian decision-makers on an appropriate response based on the humanitarian imperative and RC/RC Code of Conduct,
- Objectives:**
- a) to analyse humanitarian needs and capacity of humanitarian actors on the ground and analyze the humanitarian service gaps
 - b) to analyze the security environment, determine limits to operational considerations and appropriate security measures
 - c) to suggest 2-3 response options and relevant recommendations for INGO humanitarian response¹⁰; including scope and type of required interventions
 - d) to produce sector specific analysis and suggest sectoral response concepts, and
 - e) to determine required resources and program support requirements for suggested response options
 - f) to agree on communication strategy for dissemination of assessment results
- Approach:** This is an inter-agency assessment initiated by the 3 participating NGOs to expand the geographical and sectoral coverage, to share resources and thereby be more cost-effective and to avoid multiple assessments causing assessment fatigue among beneficiaries, humanitarian peers and Government representatives. It is also hoped that a collective presentation of the findings of this assessment will leverage more attention and awareness among donors and media to the humanitarian situation in CAR.
- Area of Focus:** Northern CAR, with emphasis on the border regions to Chad and Cameroon in NW CAR, incl. cross-border area up to Goré (S. Chad)
- Duration:** Inter-Agency Assessment 8 days (in country; individual agencies' staff might pursue additional tasks and stay longer)

¹⁰ For the 3 participating NGOs and also for the wider humanitarian community

Background:

On 9 January 2007 CAR made news, when MSF listed it at the top of its annual Top 10 Underreported Humanitarian Crisis in 2006. Apart from that story the plight of the country's 4 million people went largely unnoticed during the last year. The political, developmental and security crisis of the country has caused a growing humanitarian crisis now affecting 70,000 refugees who fled to Chad and Cameroon, 150,000 - 200,000 IDPs and overall 1-1.5 million affected population, mainly in the North of the country. Previous assessment missions and the 2007 CAP are reporting that half the population of CAR is either affected by the humanitarian crisis or at risk ("on the edge"). The affected population is spread over a large terrain with very limited infrastructure and hence difficult to reach. The government and UN country team lifted the requirement of using armed military escorts for humanitarian workers only late last year. Before the requirement was lifted, access to the affected population was very difficult. The population fled when the military escorts approached, thereby leaving humanitarian organisations without contact to the affected people. Only recent assessments without military presence began to reveal the true extent of the humanitarian crisis.

Despite the fact that the humanitarian funding for CAR has more than doubled between 2005 and 2006 (\$9.8 to \$22.3 million), only a handful of agencies are operational providing humanitarian assistance: MSF (5 sections), ICRC, National Red Cross society, the National Caritas & Diocese and COOPI. They are supported by several UN agencies. Due to funding, logistics and operational constraints these agencies are by far not covering all affected provinces and not all sectors, leaving the majority of the affected population unattended. IRC and ACF have announced their intent to start operations.

Methodology:

The assessment team will use the methodologies as appropriate that include *interalia* PRA techniques and tools, review of key reference documents, semi-structural interviews, key informants, interviews of technical staff, general observations, and focus group discussions. As a baseline for determining humanitarian service gaps the assessment team will use SPHERE standards.

Activities:

1. Consult with NGOs and UN agencies such as OCHA, UNICEF and WFP to identify key sector areas and/or geographical niches for potential humanitarian relief operations taking into consideration sector areas in which CARE/NRC/WVi have experience and capacity and to ensure there is no duplication.
2. Assess UN agency, multilateral agency and private sector planning to determine the scope for partnership
3. Assess relevant National NGO emergency programs and plans and determine their capacity, willingness and scope to partner with incoming NGOs in humanitarian relief operations.
4. Provide a rapid assessment of the capacity of Government Authorities and UN agencies to coordinate and respond to the crisis. Review potential role of Government Authorities in supporting or hindering potential relief operations, incl. the impact of widespread corruption.
5. Thoroughly analyze the security situation for international and national NGO staff, identify risks and possible security measures and determine limitations to humanitarian response options.
6. Visit the affected areas to gain an understanding of the current extent of the crisis and the operating environment. Consider any potential site selection, logistical and warehousing issues, transportation, telecommunications requirements, office needs, security measures and human and financial management issues.
7. Confirm the sectors that donors are interested in funding, the willingness of donors to fund NGOs and the potential funding that is expected to be available.

8. Assess resource requirements and constraints (human, financial, material, logistic) and costs (salaries, rent, transport, favourable exchange rates, etc) associated with starting humanitarian relief operations.
9. Develop a list of key contacts specific to proposed activities.
10. Recommend appropriate response options, framing this within longer-term response options which include viable **exit strategies**, to address **prioritized humanitarian needs**, capacity and sectoral/geographic priorities of NGOs (factoring funding limitations) and the UN, along with an **analysis of the policy and operational environment**.

This should include *inter alia*: recommended **programming option(s)**, program sectors; provide guidance on options (and associated risks) for CARE/NRC/WVi to **enhance protection of affected populations**, geographical focus; recommend **appropriate M&E systems and required capacities**.

Assessment Team:

The Assessment and core start-up team will initially be comprised of nine staff covering expertise in the following areas:

- 1. Team Leader, Programme** (Tom Friedeberg, CARE)
 - Overall Coordination of assessment
 - Liaison/external coordination (UN, Government, INGOs, Military)
 - Synthesise recommended response options
 - Lead consolidation of inter-agency assessment report
- 2. Co-Team Leader, Programme** (Mpako Foaeng, NRC)
 - Contextual analysis
 - Together with TL liaison & external coordination
 - Programme assessment, focus on protection and advocacy issues
 - Support TL in consolidation of assessment report
- 3. Co-Team Leader, Programme** (Paul Sitnam, WVi)
 - Together with TL liaison & external coordination
 - Assess health and food security needs and program options
 - Support TL in consolidation of assessment report
- 4. Logistician / Programme Logistics and Team support** (Loic Cohen, CARE)
 - Assess need and options for food and distribution programming
 - Focal point for Logistics (infrastructure and conditions) component of assessment
 - Review required operations structures for suggested response options
 - Assessment team logistics (accommodation, transport, etc.)
 - Photographic documentation
- 5. Programme** (Joao Roque, NRC)
 - Programme assessment, focus education
 - Provide sectoral input into inter-agency report
- 6. Programme** (Rob Salem, WVi)
 - Programme assessment, focus wat/san/hyg & shelter
 - Provide sectoral input into inter-agency report
- 7. Programme** (Nicole Hurtubise, CARE)

- Programme assessment, focus gender, conflict, cross border ops from Chad
- Provide sectoral input into inter-agency report

8. Programme (Gina Holmen, NRC)

- Programme assessment, focus education, protection
- Provide sectoral input into inter-agency report

9. Programme & Support (Geofroy Larde, CARE)

- Programme assessment (general)
- Support programme support/logistics analysis
- Provide input into inter-agency report

There will be an overlap in sectoral coverage, which is required as it is expected that the team splits and both teams need to be able to cover most relevant sectoral analysis. All assessment team members - if required – will allocate a percentage of their time (preferably not exceeding 40%) for agency specific tasks. The final allocation of tasks and areas of input will be agreed upon in-country by the three team leaders.

Reporting lines:

The assessment team members are reporting to the Assessment Team Leader, whereby the two Co-Team Leaders retain responsibility for their respective agencies' staff.

The Team Leader is reporting to the agencies designated coordinators (Carsten Voelz for CARE, Lisbeth Pilegaard for NRC and Philippe Guiton for WVi).

Timing

The assessment will commence approximately on 10 February 2007, with most staff arriving at the same time in Bangui. The team is expected to remain the country for approximately 8 days. (Individual agencies' staff might stay longer to follow up on agency specific issues)

Report & Outputs

A) *The inter-agency report*: should constitute clearly prioritized response options, with a recommended course of action. It is recommended that the expected content of the report will be split between 3-4 drafting groups, who will work independently on their respective parts of the report.¹¹ The 3 groups will provide their part before the end of the assessment to the 3 agencies' team leaders. The 3 team leaders will work as a drafting committee (chaired by the inter-agency assessment team leader) and submit the draft report to the 3 agencies' assessment coordinators within 5 working days after leaving CAR. The report should be in English language and no longer than 30 pages excluding annexes.

The report should contain:

1. Executive summary (max. 3 pages);
2. Overview of needs assessment and analysis of the current humanitarian situation, including operating environment and particularly security considerations;

¹¹ Ultimately the approach is to be determined by the three team leaders. However, the work load of drafting needs to be distributed in a way that most of the writing is done by the entire team during the assessment. After the assessment the emphasis should be on systematizing/refining, final analysis, documentation/presentation and dissemination.

3. Information on government response, UN agencies, donors, INGOs and LNGOs, Military;
4. Proposed 2-3 response options (incl. cross-border ops from Chad or Cameroon), including goal, objectives and key issues to consider for feasibility & cost-effectiveness (particularly considering funding, logistics and security constraints), based on likely scenarios;
5. Details on key activities,
6. Recommendations for advocacy approaches;
7. Details on program support requirements and other logistics and resource requirements;
8. Overview on explored funding options
9. Dissemination strategy for assessment findings and recommendations
10. Annexes, incl. key contacts, persons and organisations met, photographic documentation with GPS coordinates, final version of ToR, maps, etc.

B) Review of inter-agency approach: Although described as a best practice approach, NGO inter-agency assessments aren't very common. To help the NGO community to learn from this experience, the team members are requested to provide feedback on the inter-agency assessment approach, including preparation, implementation and trade-off between increased coverage and cost-effectiveness and the additional coordination efforts and inter-agency dynamics. The assessment coordinators (Lisbeth, Carsten, Philippe), will consolidate this feedback.

C) De-briefing: The agencies are planning collective de-briefings of the humanitarian community (and preferably also donors and media) upon completion of the assessment in Bangui and upon return in Geneva on their key findings and recommendations. The de-briefings are part of a dissemination strategy for the assessment findings and recommendations, which should be part of the report.

Primary Contacts in the Region:

To be provided by UN OCHA

ANNEX G: Press Statement

Central African Republic Faces Deteriorating Humanitarian Situation

GENEVA, February 20, 2007--A joint assessment conducted by CARE International, the Norwegian Refugee Council and World Vision determined that the Central African Republic is facing a serious humanitarian situation and is now at a crossroads. Although the Central African Republic has just received \$200 million in foreign investments to exploit uranium mines, and has both gold and diamonds, decades of poverty compounded by rebel attacks and incursions from the fighting in Darfur and Chad have made economic development extremely difficult. The UN estimates that 282,000 people, out of a population of four million, have been forced to flee their homes. At least 212,000 are internally displaced and 70,000, including 60% of the country's livestock owners, have fled the country altogether. While sporadic warfare has taken a toll, the country is also suffering from decades of crushing poverty and a lack of basic infrastructure. Only 39% of the population has access to safe drinking water, and nearly 30% of the country's children suffer from chronic malnutrition, and nearly 300,000 have been cut off from further education. 75% of the country has no access to toilets or sanitary facilities.

The 9-person assessment team, headed by Tom Friedeberg, who has had extensive experience as a country director for CARE in numerous assignments, Mpako Foaleng, country analyst for the Norwegian Refugee Council, and Paul Sitnam, an emergency coordinator for World Vision, reported that if an effort to reverse the country's downward spiral is not made soon, the situation could degenerate into a full-blown humanitarian emergency. "The biggest problem is the 30 years of neglect and underdevelopment that needs to be addressed," says Friedeberg. "Without an environment of stability, organizations that are interested in providing long term assistance with development programming will not be able to function in that environment and will continue to have to work in short term solutions."

The NRC's Mpako Foaleng is particularly concerned about the impact on youth. "Children currently living with their parents in the bush have had no access to education," she says. "Some adolescent boys and girls and young single mothers joined the rebels to seek protection, while others were forcibly recruited as child soldiers or taken as wives. Bringing schools to where children and adolescents have taken refuge will reduce the level of their vulnerability."

Paul Sitnam concurs. "We got a sense of chronic underdevelopment exacerbated by the conflict," he says. "Many people are coming almost to the end of their coping strategies. We saw a need for peace and stability so that people can get back to their everyday lives. If that happens we can move in with longer term development."

The situation concerning food and access to it is becoming particularly acute. Much of the past harvest (food and seeds) has been destroyed or lost, leaving little for the affected people to eat. As a result, they have had to rely more and more on their coping strategies for finding food- well in advance of the usual 'hungry season' which normally extends from around May to August. To compound this, the lack of available seed stock does not bode well for the 2007 harvest.

The assessment confirmed the findings of previous assessments that the situation in Northern CAR is primarily a humanitarian protection crisis. As suggested by some international actors, increased international presence would certainly discourage targeting civilians in the short term, and it would have an impact on their protection. However, protection on a broader scale can only be provided by the government.

The assessment recommended that the government and rebels remove the “fear factor” by issuing clear orders to their forces to respect international humanitarian law and human rights law and by ending attacks and abuse against civilians.

The assessment determined that the United Nations could play a crucial role in convincing the government to ensure better protection for civilians and to adopt transparent protocols governing humanitarian assistance and facilitating aid.

CARE, World Vision and the Norwegian Refugee Council are international non-governmental organizations devoted to the elimination of poverty and the protection of civilian populations at risk. For more information contact:

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