

INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE
WEEKLY MEETING

Summary Note

28 February 2007
Geneva

I Central African Republic - mission de-briefing

Mr. Daniel Augstburger (OCHA), Senior Emergency Officer, Surge Capacity Section, Emergency Service Branch

Mr. Augstburger briefed on his recent six-week mission to CAR, where he helped build up the OCHA office, supported the Humanitarian Coordinator and led an inter-agency mission to the northern regions of the country. His briefing focused on the outcomes of the inter-agency mission.

The mission travelled 3.500 km through the northern regions of CAR affected by conflict and violence caused by fighting between government troops and various rebel / armed groups. The motives of these groups vary, but root causal elements are poverty and years of neglect from the central government. On the often cited spill over from Darfur, Mr. Augstburger pointed out that he did not see the two conflicts as connected and stated that even without fighting in Darfur, there would be conflict in CAR.

Many villages in the North have been burned and looted by the government troops - attacked because the population is seen as supporters of the rebels. Human rights abuses have been carried out with complete impunity and serious breaches of the laws of armed conflict have happened. The civilians have fled into the bush where they have very limited shelter and access to basic services. Malnutrition rates are rising, caused by lack of adequate food, water and medicine. The burnings have also affected the livelihoods of people since planting seeds and agricultural tools are often lost in the fires. Children have been recruited as soldiers for the rebels.

The CAP 2007 estimates that almost one million people are struck by hostilities in the North with at least 100 villages burnt during 2006 and over 220,000 people forced to flee their homes (150,000 of which are internally displaced). The country team has urged to revise (upwards) the estimated number of affected and displaced persons.

1.1 Humanitarian action:

Until recently the North had not seen any humanitarian or development activities for over a decade, and international presence is still very limited. Overall humanitarian presence in the CAR has now started to build up. The recent arrival of international NGOs has increased the number from six to 15. In Bangui, the participation in the humanitarian country team meetings is also increasing. However, Mr. Augstburger pointed out, that the case of deployment has been hard to make with a number of large NGOs, since CAR does not presently constitute a large-scale humanitarian crisis.

Coping mechanisms in the CAR are presently stretched to the maximum and emergency assistance is needed before the start of the rainy season, in the beginning of April. FAO has received large support from donors, and the HC is expecting an emergency team from FAO to arrive soon. A shelter program is being initiated in the northeast for approximately 40.000 beneficiaries. Furthermore, a nutrition assessment is being finalised by Action Contre la Faim supported by UNICEF.

UNICEF and the Ministry of Education have started a joint program to train parents to perform basic teaching for the children who have had their school attendance interrupted by the conflict.

Only since December, has the UN been able to move in the North without armed escort. There have been no security incidents so far but the Government has stated that it is unable to guarantee security. Mr. Augstburger stressed the need to increase protection capacity in the North.

In terms of movement and access, however, logistics and the state of the infrastructure pose major challenges. Roads between many towns in the North are virtually non-existing.

The following main points arose from the discussion:

- The country team has urged the deployment of a Peacekeeping Mission along the Chadian border. Humanitarian actors have been engaging with UN DPKO
- Strong joint advocacy is needed to alert the international community to the violations in CAR. Much has been done already to this effect at HQ level and in donor capitals.
- On the political situation and backing of the UN: Libya has been engaged in mediating between the parties to the conflict. Donor embassies in Bangui support the UN and inter-agency efforts and the World Bank is reengaging in CAR.

For images and maps related the inter-agency mission, please see Mr. Augstburgers presentation at: <http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/content/documents/docsdetails.asp?meetID=1240&agendaID=1710>

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