

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

BACKGROUND

Despite abundant natural resources, the Central African Republic (CAR) is one of the world's poorest countries, suffering from a deep structural crisis as a result of a decade of internal conflicts. Public infrastructure and private resources have been destroyed. Approximately 73 percent of the population lives in abject poverty, surviving on less than US\$1 per day. Tens of thousands of refugees have fled CAR to neighboring countries, adding to regional insecurity. Despite positive steps towards stability after the elections of 2005, the situation worsened in 2006, resulting in low-intensity conflict. Increased insecurity has pushed over one million people across the line from poverty to humanitarian emergency.

Thus, 2007 is a critical year both for helping people struck by waves of violence and the most destitute working to re-establish their livelihoods elsewhere. It is also the year when the democratically elected government will prove its resilience or dissolve.

CHALLENGES FACING FOOD SECURITY AND LIVELIHOODS

Approximately 62 percent of the population of CAR lives in rural areas and relies on agriculture as the main source of livelihood. Low household incomes mean that 80 percent of resources are used to purchase food. Though the country has the capacity to produce enough food to feed its entire population, recent insecurity due to widespread banditry, including looting of agricultural fields and food storehouses, has discouraged local farmers and dramatically reduced agricultural production. Rural households have depleted most of their productive agricultural assets, including livestock.

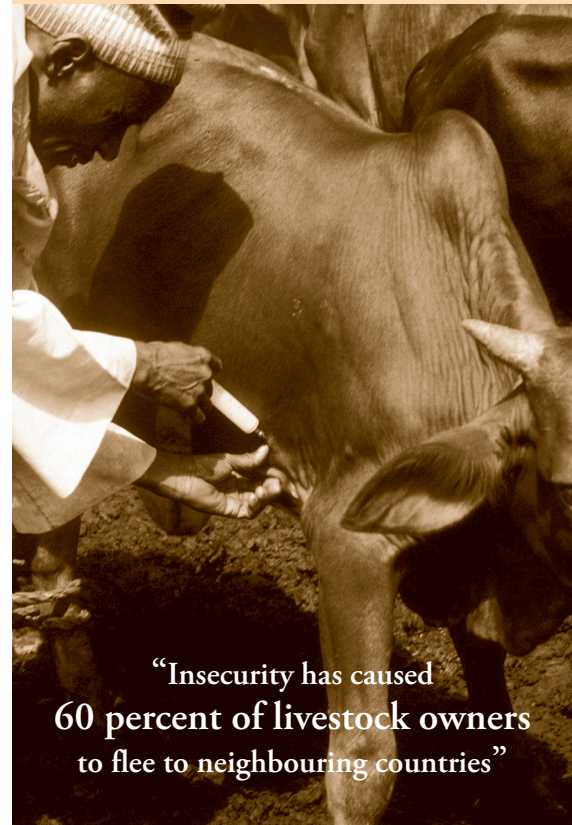
Insecurity has caused 60 percent of CAR's livestock owners to flee to neighbouring countries. Honey production, once widely used in the northwest as an income-generating activity, is now only carried out in limited areas. Fresh-water fishing, an important source of income and food, has also been affected by the loss of equipment such as fishing nets. Cotton production, a major source of income, almost collapsed due to population displacement. Traditional seed-saving practices have also been disrupted, rendering many seed stocks impure and unproductive. Access to improved seeds will be crucial to restoring the production system, improving availability of food for producers and their families in the short term, and increasing access to food in the markets in the long term.

While most of the country is characterized by food insecurity and poverty, the worst affected area is the northwestern region which, with a total population of 1.3 million, is by far the most densely populated.

KEY FACTS

- Population: 4.0 million
- GDP (PPP): US\$1 128
- Population below poverty line: 73%
- Labour force by occupation: agriculture 55%, industry 20%, services 25%
- Total land area: 622 984 sq km, bordering Cameroon, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Republic of the Congo and the Sudan
- Total arable land: 3.1%
- Life expectancy: male: 39 years, female: 43 years
- Literacy rate: male: 63.3% , female: 40%
- Human Development Index: 171/177

(Source: UN; World Bank)



“Insecurity has caused 60 percent of livestock owners to flee to neighbouring countries”

FAO IN CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Better donor response in 2006 permitted FAO to improve the livelihoods of more than 15 000 beneficiaries. FAO's support to cassava, an important crop, resulted in a visible increase in production and reduced high incidences of cassava disease (mosaic).

Chronic malnutrition rates in these areas exceed 30 percent. More than 150 000 IDPs and 60 000 persons affected by HIV/AIDS will be in need of emergency food assistance.

FAO RESPONSE

Throughout 2006, FAO distributed 20 tonnes of corn and rice seeds, hand tools and 30 000 cuttings of cassava to 15 000 beneficiaries in the northwestern region, supporting a visible increase in production. To sustain these gains, it is necessary to pursue seed distribution in 2007. The FAO estimates 500 tonnes of seeds as well as small agricultural tools are required for approximately 25 000 rural families in the northwestern region.

In 2007, ensuring food access to displaced and vulnerable populations, especially in the northwest of the country, will be a priority. This will be achieved through projects aimed at restoring the country's agricultural production systems, particularly in the northwestern region, and strengthening the coordination of food security activities with monitoring, data collection and dissemination of information.

PROPOSALS: FAO EMERGENCY AND REHABILITATION ASSISTANCE

Funding required: US\$3 261 610

Support to the coordination of emergency agricultural activities and improvement of information system

Objectives: Strengthen the coordination of emergency relief and rehabilitation in food security and the agricultural sector. Establish an agricultural recovery information system, monitoring, data collection and dissemination (livelihood, agriculture/livestock and nutrition).

Activities: Provision of technical expertise to humanitarian organizations engaged in agricultural assistance in CAR and filling knowledge gaps identified by programme partners; playing a proactive role in the Food Security Thematic Group focusing on the identification of vulnerable groups with rapid needs and livelihood assessments; monitoring crop and livestock production; improving the quality and facilitating the sharing of food security data by setting up an inter-agency food security information system; and improving the capacity of national bodies to collect and manage information and to carry out actions.

Beneficiaries: Actors engaged in the agriculture sector, donors, Ministry of Agriculture and rural communities.

Implementing partners: Ministry of Agriculture, actors in the food security sector.

Duration: January – December 2007.

Funds requested: US\$360 800.

Emergency assistance to small farmers affected by the conflict through seeds and tools distribution

Objectives: Assist vulnerable farmers to resume crop production through the provision of seed and tools.

Activities: Identification of beneficiaries; procurement of seeds and tools and provision of technical assistance to the farmers; and follow-up monitoring and evaluation of the activities of implementing partners.

Beneficiaries: 17 000 households in the northwestern region of the CAR.

Implementing partners: National and international NGOs.

Duration: January – December 2007.

Funds requested: US\$983 950.

Support to the early recovery of the production of quality seeds in the Central African Republic

Objectives: Enhance the seed security of the most common food crops and support the rehabilitation of the informal seed production system of rural communities, farmers' associations and producers' groups.

Activities: Identify beneficiaries; procure seeds, tools and other agricultural inputs locally or internationally and provide technical assistance to the farmers; organize seed treatment/storage; and conduct follow-up and monitoring of the activities of implementing partners and evaluate them.

Beneficiaries: Direct beneficiaries: 240 farmers; indirect beneficiaries: 22 000 farmers.

Implementing partners: International NGOs, rural communities, farmers' associations and producers' groups.

Duration: January – December 2007.

Funds requested: US\$709 500.

Improved food security for women and HIV/AIDS-affected households

Objectives: Restore and promote food security and livelihoods for IDPs and HIV/AIDS-affected households.

Activities: Procurement of vegetable seeds and small farming tools; distribution of agricultural inputs; technical assistance; monitoring and evaluation.

Beneficiaries: 2 000 households (10 000 people, mostly women and children).

Implementing partners: NGO partners.

Duration: January – December 2007.

Funds requested: US\$430 760.

Emergency rehabilitation of traditional fresh water fishery activities in Ouham prefecture

Objectives: To restore livelihoods of fishermen in rural communities affected by the conflict and, in doing so, facilitate the sustainable resettlement and reintegration of displaced populations.

Activities: Provide complete kits of essential fishing gear, fishing nets and twines. The kit will be adapted to the different fishing techniques used by different communities. To facilitate marketing of increased catches, FAO will build the capacity of fishermen communities by improving fish conservation techniques (drying and smoking).

Beneficiaries: 1 000 conflict-affected fishermen and their families.

Implementing partners: International and national NGOs in close collaboration with fishing communities.

Duration: January – September 2007.

Funds requested: US\$398 200.

Support to honey producers in the Nana-Grébizi, Kémo and south Ouham prefectures

Objectives: Promote income generating activities and improve nutrition of the population, especially malnourished children.

Activities: Procurement of 3 600 improved hives to address the essential needs of households in the Nana-Grébizi, Kémo and south Ouham prefectures; procurement of other inputs such as gloves, shoes, and other harvest tools; and technical assistance, monitoring and evaluation.

Beneficiaries: 9 000 IDPs and autochthons (1 800 households) and 4 500 malnourished children in the Nana-Grébizi, Kémo and south Ouham prefectures.

Implementing partners: Local NGOs.

Duration: January – August 2007.

Funds requested: US\$378 400.