

Central African Republic

Background

During 2008, tentative but positive progress was made towards peace in the Central African Republic. Following a national inclusive political dialogue, a global peace accord was signed between the Government and two key militant groups in July. Although one group suspended its participation in the process and there was a new outbreak of violence, they had re-entered negotiations by mid-September. As a result of improved security, an estimated 85 000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) have returned to their homes, predominantly in the northeast of the country, only to find their houses destroyed and their fields overgrown.

Banditry and incursions by armed groups from neighbouring countries have forced thousands more from their homes in 2008. There are an estimated 108 000 IDPs remaining, most in the northwest. A further 104 000 Central Africans continue to live as refugees in Cameroon, Chad and the Sudan's Darfur region, too scared to return to their villages.

KEY FACTS

- Population: 4.39 million
- GNI per capita (USD): 380
- Population below poverty line: 66.6%
- Life expectancy: 42.7 years
- Total arable land: 3.1%
- Population in agriculture: 74%,
- Population undernourished: 44%
- Total land area: 622 984 sq km
- Human Development Index: 171/177

(Source: UN; World Bank; World Factbook)

It is expected that this pattern of return in one area and displacement in another will continue in 2009. The Central African Republic is one of the poorest countries in the world, ranking 171 out of 177 countries on the United Nations Humanitarian Development Index. Should political dialogue fail and violence increase in the coming year, the humanitarian crisis will deepen, threatening the lives of millions.

Challenges facing food security and livelihoods

Globally rising food prices have had a direct impact on food availability in the Central African Republic, which relies heavily on imports. Between January and June 2008, the price of basic foodstuffs rose 25 percent. Armed conflict in northern Central African Republic, accompanied by forced displacement and looting, has resulted in a decrease in agricultural production within the country. Farmers remaining on their land in northwestern areas have limited access to their fields because of insecurity, while those returning to their homes in the northeast lack key assets – tools, seeds and livestock – that are essential for rebuilding their livelihoods.

Reduced production of cassava, the population's main staple food crop, due to a lack of planting materials and outbreaks of African mosaic disease has further reduced access to food, particularly among the poorest sections of the population.

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

As families lower their food intake they become more vulnerable to disease. At present, more than one in ten children suffers from acute malnutrition. Those most affected are the two-thirds of the population living on less than USD 1 per day.

During 2009, the food security cluster in the Central African Republic will aim to mitigate the impact of rising food prices and support access to productive resources by providing basic inputs and training, strengthening community safety nets and developing new techniques and technologies to increase production.



FAO response

In order to improve planning, humanitarian organizations need more accurate information on the food security situation in the Central African Republic. During 2008, FAO and its partners established the foundation for a national food security data collection system and prepared the first Integrated Food Security and Humanitarian Phase Classification (IPC) analysis for the country. In 2009, FAO will seek to reinforce and refine methodology for data collection, train technicians and collect, analyse and share information with partners. Strengthening the IPC working group will provide a clearer understanding of the food security situation.

A key part of FAO's efforts to improve food security and agriculture-based livelihoods in the Central African Republic will involve the distribution and/or multiplication of key agricultural inputs. HIV/AIDS-affected households will be provided with vegetable seeds and gardening tools, as well as with training in better production practices, to improve their nutritional status. Goats will be provided to groups of households, together with training and building materials for livestock shelters. These initial beneficiaries will then distribute the offspring to other households in their groups. In addition, school gardening will be promoted through the provision of seeds, tools and training to improve nutrition at school level and support the rebuilding of the national school system.

Given the importance of cassava in the daily diet of Central Africans, FAO will identify and introduce mosaic-resistant varieties, multiply these in a secure environment and train national counterparts on new varieties and multiplication techniques.

“More than one in ten children suffers from acute malnutrition”

PROPOSALS: FAO EMERGENCY AND REHABILITATION ASSISTANCE

Total funding requested: USD 2 957 325

Improving the food security of families affected by HIV/AIDS	
Objectives:	To strengthen the food security of households affected by HIV/AIDS.
Activities:	Identify vulnerable households affected by HIV/AIDS; procure and distribute vegetable seeds and gardening tools to vulnerable families; provide training on agricultural techniques to improve productivity and cultivation practices; provide technical assistance; and carry out monitoring and evaluation.
Beneficiaries:	75 000 people.
Implementing partners:	National Council to Fight Against AIDS.
Duration:	January – December 2009.
Funds requested:	USD 723 000.

Improving food security through cassava multiplication	
Objectives:	To strengthen household food security by reintroducing mosaic-resistant cassava.
Activities:	Introduce and screen ACMVD-resistant cassava varieties; procure initial vegetative material of selected varieties from research institutes (IITA, Cameroon research station and others); set up a safe, rapid mass multiplication system; train counterparts on rapid mass multiplication; provide technical assistance; and carry out monitoring and evaluation.
Beneficiaries:	320 farmers and 16 000 indirect beneficiaries.
Implementing partners:	ACDA, ICRA and NGOs.
Duration:	January – December 2009.
Funds requested:	USD 377 600.

Consolidation of the national food security monitoring system

Objectives:	To improve the food security of the population by better identifying their needs; and, using the IPC tool, analyse the food security situation and share the results with the humanitarian community.
Activities:	Refine and strengthen questionnaires and methodology for data collection; train technicians to collect data; collect and analyse primary data and publish information for partners; and strengthen the national IPC working group, train technicians on methodology and continue analysis based on food security data and information from other sectors.
Beneficiaries:	Humanitarian community.
Implementing partners:	Local and international NGOs and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.
Duration:	January – December 2009.
Funds requested:	USD 310 000.

Promotion of school gardening

Objectives:	To improve the nutritional status of children at school.
Activities:	Identify schools and their needs; procure key inputs (vegetable seeds, tools, etc.); train representatives of parent associations and teachers; set up school gardens; provide technical assistance; and conduct monitoring and evaluation.
Beneficiaries:	3 000 children.
Implementing partners:	ACDA and NGOs.
Duration:	January – December 2009.
Funds requested:	USD 459 600.

Improving food security and household income with small animal breeding	
Objectives:	To improve food security through small animal breeding.
Activities:	Organize groups composed of 20 households; distribute ten goats (nine females and one male) to ten households per group and begin breeding activities; ensure veterinary follow up; distribute the animals bred by the initial ten households to the remaining ten households in each group to reach a total of 7 500 households; train all beneficiaries on herd management, local fodder production/conservation, etc.; distribute basic materials to enable beneficiaries to build animal shelters; and strengthen the technical and institutional capacity of the Government counterpart.
Beneficiaries:	37 500 people.
Implementing partners:	Fédération nationale des éleveurs Centrafricains, Agence nationale pour le développement de l'élevage and Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.
Duration:	January – December 2009.
Funds requested:	USD 1 087 125.

