

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC: REFUGEES FROM THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC)

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The situation

Following an outbreak of fighting in the DRC's Equator province at the end of December 1998 and the beginning of January, 1999, some 7,500 persons crossed into the Central African Republic, requesting asylum and assistance.

Recent events

In March, 1999, following a decision taken by the Government, 300 Congolese refugees were transferred to camps situated in Boubou, located in close proximity to Bossangoa (300 kms south of the capital Bangui).

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

Working in close co-ordination with UNHCR (as lead agency) and WFP (for food), the Central African Red Cross Society (CARCS), with support provided by the Federation, is focusing its assistance efforts on the health and sanitation sectors. Following Information Bulletin N° 3 (issued on 25 March, 1999), the Spanish Red Cross indicated a strong interest in supporting this operation, and subsequently provided CHF 93,383.

Health w

The Boubou dispensary is staffed by one doctor, a medical technician, a nurse, and 4 emergency health workers. During the month of May, 526 new cases were reported, with illnesses primarily consisting of malaria (17.5%), respiratory infections (7.41%), skin ailments (7.03 %), diarrhoea (5.32%), internal parasites (5.90%) gastro-intestinal disorders (3.8%), oral rehydration (2.6%), and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases or STD's (4.75%). Other miscellaneous ailments made up the remaining number of health visits. The increase in the number of cases is considered mainly due to the number of local residents who also requested medical attention. During the reporting period, 42 pregnant women were provided medical assistance, with 10 births. 92 children in the 0 to 5 year age group were vaccinated, and this programme will continue for the next few months. Under the health education programme, daily health seminars were organised to address the prevention of malaria, STD's, and AIDS. The medical issues remain of significant concern, and it is planned to increase the capacity of the vaccination campaign in June.

Sanitation w

The sanitation team consists of a sanitation technician and two CARCS emergency assistants. An information dissemination campaign was undertaken to address issues of hygiene and environmental concerns, with a total of 94 families covered.

Community Services w

The construction of a pre-school/nursery building has been completed, and some 45 children have been inscribed in the center. It is anticipated that this number will increase with the arrival of new refugees coming from the Bouca site.

To prepare for the arrival of the rainy season, seeds for planting were distributed to mothers of refugee families.

Outstanding needs

Because of implementation delays and funding constraints, the medical team has only been able to use one temporary building as a medical dispensary center. The Red Cross team will evaluate ways to complete the construction of a second building.

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