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FY 2009 FOREIGN ASSISTANCE GOALS

Although the Central African Republic (CAR) has often been described as a “post-conflict” state following the elections of 2005, this has never really been true. The country has continued to suffer from a series of political and military conflicts that have generated hundreds of thousands of refugees and internally displaced persons. Despite the United Nations (UN)-sponsored Inclusive Political Dialogue of 2008 that resulted in a peace agreement and Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) process between the Government and various rebel groups, continuing insurgencies in the northeastern part of the country and incursions by the Lord’s Resistance Army in the southeast have resulted in internal displacement and refugee inflows from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Additionally, delays in DDR implementation have perpetuated internal displacement in the northwest and slowed the return of refugees from Chad and Cameroon.

As a result, the majority of U.S. assistance to the CAR in FY 2009 has continued to be humanitarian assistance delivered via multilateral humanitarian organizations. The United States Government (USG) has contributed approximately \$5.5 million to the World Food Program for FY 2009, and has committed \$35 million to the Global Fund for AIDS, Malaria, and Tuberculosis since 2003. It has also provided approximately \$5.7 million in assistance to refugees and displaced persons inside the country through other UN agencies and nongovernmental organizations.

The largest ongoing USG bilateral initiative is the \$2.5 million Property Rights for Artisanal Diamond Development (PRADD) project. Other projects focused on civil society, human rights, and the environment.

Peace and Security

In FY 2009, the USG provided \$70,000 for English-language training for officers of the Central African Armed Forces. This training contained a strong human rights component, and enabled officers to attend international conferences on security sector reform.

Governing Justly and Democratically

USG programs in this area were limited in FY 2009, but two programs were implemented with significant results. The USG:

- Provided support to the Central African Observatory of Human Rights to implement a program on combating “New Forms of Slavery in the CAR.” This program led in part to the reform of the Penal Code, which now includes penalties for human trafficking.
- Provided Radio Ndeke Luka funds to distribute programming to partner-community radio stations in rural areas. In a country with high illiteracy, radio is the primary means to distribute information. The programs were centered on themes of democracy, good governance, and human rights.

Economic Growth

The largest ongoing USG-CAR bilateral initiative is the PRADD project. At least 15 percent of Central Africans benefit directly from the production and sale of artisanal diamonds. The fundamental goal of the PRADD project is to achieve a system of control and access (i.e., property rights) regarding alluvial diamonds from mine to export that is clearly defined, widely recognized, socially acceptable, and reliably functioning. The five intermediate results are:

- Customary land and natural resource rights in target areas are identified, clarified, and formally recognized
- System for reliable tracking of production and initial sale information is strengthened and appropriated by the Government of the CAR
- Benefits of mining activities to local communities increased and food production are diversified and intensified
- Capacity to prevent and mitigate environmental impacts of artisanal mining is strengthened
- Access and availability of information on artisanal diamond mining to stakeholders is increased

Some major achievements for FY 2009 included the mapping and registration of 435 mine claims; the organization of 39 community events to examine environmental mitigation methods, which has so far resulted in the rehabilitation of 5.3 hectares of land; and the organization of 4 major stakeholder seminars, which resulted in increased education and bargaining power for local miners.

In FY 2009, the PRADD project developed three multimedia films about the importance of the Kimberley Process, the PRADD model, and best practices in small-scale diamond production. These films were aired during the Artisanal Diamond Working Group at a conference on Good Governance in the Extractive Industries, and at several venues with the USG. As a result of these presentations, six producing countries (the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Congo-Brazzaville, Guinea, Mali, Sierra Leone, and Brazil) have requested technical assistance to implement the model in their respective countries.

According to the CAR’s Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper for 2008-2010, one of the country’s greatest challenges is the lack of “basic infrastructure, in order to free up the physical bottlenecks that suffocate economic revival.” In this context, road rehabilitation has been identified by the CAR

and its development partners as a priority need in order to facilitate economic growth, improved living conditions, access to social services, security, and national integration.

Regional Road 8, the road targeted for rehabilitation under this program, traverses the Yadé region, regarded as the breadbasket of the CAR. This region produces a diverse set of agricultural products for trade and subsistence. Improved access across this very important transport corridor stands to reduce transportation and associated transaction costs considerably, while promoting economic and social exchanges between Bozoum and Bossangoa, the two most populous prefectures in CAR.

Through the FY 2008-09 supplemental/bridge appropriation, the Mission is supporting a rural road rehabilitation and maintenance program aimed at improving access along a 137-kilometer stretch of Regional Road 8 linking the centers of Bozoum and Bossangoa. An underlying objective is to increase economic opportunity among local communities to be employed through cash-for-work during project implementation. In addition, food commodities managed by the World Food Program, to which the USG is the largest donor, will be distributed to complement and leverage cash-for-work compensation for community-based labor. Strategically linked microenterprise development training will also be programmed to help support private sector entities that can assist in the sustainable maintenance of the road in tandem with the CAR and other development partners.

In FY 2009, the project focused on prerequisite surveys relating to environmental assessment and mitigation, and engineering designs, taking into account climate, biodiversity, topographical, geotechnical, and environmental data.

The next scheduled phase of the project will comprise community mobilization, labor-intensive cash-for-work, and training for potential and established enterprises – all aimed at rehabilitating and maintaining the road and expanding economic opportunity among the affected communities.