

12 July 2014

CRF Mission 10 to Chad
May 23 to June 9, 2014

Bill Felstiner
Casilda Gil de Santivañes Finat

This first part of this memo describes the conditions that we observed while in Chad. The second part reports on the status of existing CRF projects.

Consultations: We met with representatives of UNHCR, ACRA, FLM, ADES, Caracal Oil, the eye association, the US Embassy (Consul General, BPRM) and CSSI in NDJ, with those of ACRA, FLM, Mentor, PAM, UNHCR, the Beureuh school, CSSI, the inspector of schools and the Prefect at Goré, with the CRF-supported college women in Doba and with FLM, UNHCR, CSSI and the Prefect at Maro.

Interviews with refugees: We met with various refugee committees at Amboko, Gondje, Dosseye and Belom.

Site visits: We inspected the returnee camps at Danamadja, Sarh, Sido and NDJ.

Numbers: As of May 25, 2014 the numbers of refugees in the five south Chad camps were – Amboko 10,679, Belom 26,300, Dosseye 19,878, Gondje 11,340, and Moyo 10,463. Total 78,660 (77,953 as of June 6). An additional 5,553 refugees are living in villages within 30 km. of Goré. Thousands more will be transferred to Dosseye in June from the transit camp at Dembo. Ninety-eight thousand returnees are said to be living in five transit centers.

Substantive issues;

Food security. Although the ration estimates do not all jibe, it is clear that there are serious shortages with serious consequences and no miracle that will set things straight in sight. Note that in addition to the refugees, there are nearly 100,000 returnees, many in worse shape than the refugees, who are in the last analysis dependent on many of the same resources. The large numbers of new refugees places additional strain on the limited supply of land, tools and seeds. Hunger eats away at all activities including work, school and even teaching.

We were told several versions of the current food ration. (a) 17 kg. per person per month reduced to 6 kg. (35%) FLM. (b) 2,100 reduced to less than 800 calories (36%), HCR/Goré (c) 2,100 to 750-800 calories (35-38%), Dosseye refugees. (d) 4.5 kg. sorghum, 1.9 kg. peas, 0.75 kg. oil per person per month, Dosseye refugees. (e) 2100 to 900 calories (43%), HCR Maro & Belom refugees. (f) Although the ration is 950 calories, the refugees are actually only getting 450 (21%), FLM Maro. The deprivations were said to be worse for the nomadic refugees and for girls. Whatever the version, unless there is substantial improvement by September 2014 our contacts agreed that they would be faced with the consequences of widespread malnutrition, including deaths.

After BF's return to Santa Barbara, UNHCR in Goré informed him that while he was in Chad the World Food Program promised to increase the ration for new refugees to the "full food basket." This change in policy, when it actually occurs, will mean very substantial improvement in food security for new refugees, but it leaves

unaffected the prospects of old refugees and, more important because their situation is more precarious, those of the returnees.

In several returnee camps (Bitoye, Sido and Doyaba) vouchers rather than food are distributed. The vouchers, equivalent to 4000 CFA (8.00 USD) per person per month, can be traded for food at local markets at prices fixed by the government. Merchants can cash the vouchers with the government. Everyone agrees that the amount of food that can be purchased with 4000 CFA/month is totally inadequate.

How do the refugees attempt to cope with the reduced rations; what do you do when you do not have enough to eat? Forage for wild roots, gather wood in the forest for sale (illegal), hang around the market looking for scraps, try to find the odd job, trade sex for food or money (illegal), steal (illegal), sell other stuff. When the rains come and you know how to farm, farm. If you have seeds, tools and land.

Although they may have been overtaken by events, we were while in Chad told about two different plans to re-allocate the available food supply. One is to eliminate the ration for old refugees and restore it for new refugees. (Restore apparently only affects sorghum; no change is contemplated for the other ingredients). The theory is that the old refugees ought to be able to cope without food aid. When asked about the consequences, old refugees gave different answers. In Gondje the refugees were confident that if they had seeds etc., they could manage while in Amboko, where they had cultivated the same fields for more than 10 years, they were alarmed because the fields were overworked and had become unproductive.

The other plan is based on a 2012 household economic analysis that divided the refugee population into four groups. (1) Vulnerable refugees who would get total assistance, (2) less vulnerable folks who initially would get total assistance, but then face reductions, (3) better off refugees who would on a case by case basis get little assistance and (4) those well off who would get nothing. Such a regime is said to have worked in Mali. The problem is that the system is based on 2012 determinations of size of the four groups – 30%, 40%, 16% and 14%. If new refugees change the proportions (they will and in the direction of the more vulnerable), the aggregate need gets greater, but the supply may not,

Everyone we asked said that our highest priority should be food assistance. We are too late to help with the “grand champs” program that is just about to get underway. But we can provide assistance to the winter gardening (vegetables) program that begins in October. FLN proposed that we support 1,400 households with tools, seeds, pesticides & small animals (goats) at a cost \$70,000. BF will propose that we donate what we have unencumbered in the bank in September. It will not be 70K, but we could do more after the Thanksgiving to New Years fund raising effort. Moreover, Catherine has some good ideas about mobilizing (SB) farmer to (refugee) farmer support that could produce additional resources.

Housing. Although there are continuing needs for housing for new refugees, particularly for people with special needs, the housing needs of returnees are more critical. For instance, at the camp outside of NDJ where 4,300 of 4,900 returnees are women and children we observed four types of housing – new square plastic houses (no doors or windows) provided by UNICEF, old square plastic houses some of which had been damaged (holes in the sides & roofs) by storms, communal housing consisting of a large awning with no sides, and some people living in what had been open sheds for motorcycle storage. Once it rains, the area will flood. In the camps at Donamadja, Sarh and Sido, many shelters (awaiting plastic sheeting from UNICEF) consisted of makeshift combinations of twigs, thatch, rugs and clothing. And the rains had begun in the south.

Relief for returnees may be on the way. UNHCR & ADES have set an ambitious target that would reach 90% of returnees (25,000 in Danamadja, 27,000 in Maingama (including returnees to be relocated from Sido and Doyaba), 1,050 in Gaoui and 2,500 in Bitoye and Baibokoum). In all UNHCR-ADES intends to build 3,000 shelters in Danamadja (500 of adobe/brick), 5,400 in Maingama (500 of adobe/brick), 1,050 in Gaoui, 500 in

Baibokoum/Bitoye and 350 in Sido. However, UNHCR & ADES still need access to additional residential land in Danamadja and to clear 1,000 hectares in Maingama.

Health services. To be fair, we acknowledge spending more time with refugees complaining about health services than we did with medical personnel. These views ought then to be understood as what sociologists call accounts rather than uncontested facts. That said refugees complain of untrained field assistants when qualified nurses exist in the refugee population, insufficient attention to cardiac cases who cannot wait for re-settlement, inadequate treatment of chronic diseases, inadequate emergency transport, inadequate laboratory facilities, shortages of medicines, a need to expand maternity services, a need for more food for HIV patients with heightened hunger from antiretroviral drugs, premature release of women from health centers after childbirth, insufficient numbers of nurses, overworked, impolite, stressed health care staff, long queues for service, prescriptions that cannot be filled, difficulties in procuring medicines through the international pipeline for mentally ill patients and epileptics, and too few birthing tables so that deliveries need to be made on the floor. UNHCR does not have the resources to expand the water supply at Dosseye and Belom and cannot afford to buy the needed number of jerry cans.

Education. All the old saws. Little state support; ill-trained and underpaid community teachers; no training materials; no books; no vocational or literacy training. The schools frequently need fences and latrines. To some extent poor attendance is a matter of uneducated parents who do not place much value on school for their children, but a more significant factor is hunger. Those children who manage to get to school frequently leave at the first opportunity to scrounge for food. A new challenge arises from university students from Bangui who have little opportunity to continue their education in Chad.

Safety. Dosseye – The committees reported no significant problems of safety. In addition to government patrols, every neighborhood has its own security team. Alcohol use can lead to noise, but no major security problems. Despite UNHCR pleas for more women police and gendarmerie, the government continues to send only men. Amboko – The camp is safe, even at night. There are problems of theft and at one time soldiers came to the camp at night seeking women, but UNHCR put a stop to such behavior. Some UNHCR personnel believe that the refugees could avoid trouble with the police if they followed prescribed HCR channels rather than deal directly with the authorities. In all camps, refugees complain of safety issues outside the camps such as when they are on their way to the fields. Some women on the camp committees did complain about sexual and domestic violence. Instances were cited where rape was ignored and instead the rape victim was married off to the rapist.

Religious conflict. Why are Muslims and Christians at peace in the camps when they were slaughtering each other just months before in CAR? BF has two theories. One is that the atrocities committed in CAR were “unnatural” actions at war with the actors’ normal moral compasses. When placed in a situation where such behavior was not “expected”, these ordinary people reverted to their normal, peaceable behavior. The second is contextual. If these refugees had been housed in new camps where they faced each other without any intermediation, who knows what might have happened. In fact, however, they were integrated into much larger groups with a history of peaceful co-existence and simply conformed to established routines and expectations.

* Additional details are available from BF, felstiner@gmail.com.

This part of the memo describes the status of CRF’s projects in south Chad, as they existed at the time of the mission.

Beureuh School. In 2013-14 CRF had provided training materials for teachers, conducted teacher training and funded materials for the construction of the guardian’s house with the understanding that the house would be built by the parents of the schoolchildren through the APE, their association. We interviewed four teachers and were convinced that the training regime was a success. The teachers then told us that they had not been paid for

two months. It seems that the parents association had not built the guardian's house but had hired someone to do it, using funds intended for the teachers to pay for the construction. This revelation led to re-consideration of CRF's reliance on the APE. During the ensuing discussion, in which Miryam from HCR and the head teacher took leading roles, it became apparent that we should not overinvest in the notion that parents, themselves for the most part unschooled, see a great deal of merit in school attendance. As a consequence, we do not believe that CRF ought to fund any more activities at the school until either the greater refugee community, perhaps mobilized by the teachers, appears willing to be an active partner in school improvements or CRF contracts with ACRA to run the kind of sensibilization program that has been so successful in Moyo camp outside of Haraze.

Haraze area schools. In large part based on grants from the Favrot Fund of Houston TX, CRF has for several years funded programs in the Haraze area, and especially in Moyo camp, designed both to get children (particularly girls) to go to school and stay there and to improve the quality of the educational experience through teacher training and the provision of school materials. Our partner in this work is ACRA, an Italian NGO with vast experience in Chadian schools. The Favrot Fund made another grant of \$20,000 to CRF in May 2014 and we conferred with ACRA in Goré about the components of the 2014 program. We informally committed to supporting a program costing \$33,000 that involves sensibilization, hygiene training, teacher training and an adult literacy program. The formal application will be submitted to the CRF Board later this summer.

Housing. In 2013 CRF funded the construction of 605 houses in Belom and Dosseye camps. These houses, built by our partner the Lutheran World Federation, have been completed. We inspected both sites and talked to the occupants of several of the houses. In Dosseye each house had a plaque built into the wall with the inscription "CRF and a number."

Girls at College. In 2013-14 we funded the complete costs for three young women to attend college in Doba with the understanding that on completion of the course they would return to teach at Beureuh. We were under the impression that it was a teacher training college. In fact, it is a normal university. One of the women is studying history; two are studying science. The history student and one of the others have passed almost all their examinations after the first half-year. The other, an older woman who obtained her BAC some years ago did not do well. Unless she improves we will have an issue on our hands.

Food aid. On Feb. 27, 2014 Caracal Oil transferred \$15,000 to CRF to provide food assistance for refugees from CAR living in UNHCR camps in south Chad. CRF decided to use the funds in aid of three groups of people with special needs -- disabled and older (59+) refugees in the three Goré camps and unaccompanied children from Dosseye camp living in Goré and studying at the high school there. The food provided to these groups was in addition to the normal (inadequate) ration from PAM (World Food Program).

The following food was purchased and stored in the FLM (Lutheran World Federation) warehouse:

Beans, 11,500 kg., costing 3,450,000 CFA. The ration is 9.5 kg. per person per month.

Rice, 5,000 kg., costing 2,200,000 CFA. The ration is 4 kg. per person per month.

Salt, 800 kg., costing 192,000 CFA. The ration is 0.75 kg. per person per month.

Oil, 1,260 liters, costing 1,260,000 CFA. The ration is 1 liter per person per month.

The actual distributions are made by PAM, which distributes all food in the camps. The program will extend over four months. Three distributions have been completed by the time of this report. Of the 288 refugees included in the first distribution, 197 were more than 59 years old. In the second distribution 222 of the 337 recipients were more than 59 while in the third distribution the number was 192 of 269. Distributions took place on May 12-14, 2014, June 12-14, 2014 and July 9-10, 2014. The refugee responses have, in the words of one of the people who did the distribution, been "overwhelmingly positive, accompanied by thank yous, smiles, wishes of good health, etc."

Tricycles and bicycles. CRF spent \$11,000 in 2013-14 to procure new, and repair old, tricycles. Many were in evident during our visit to the camps and, occasionally, along a road running from camp to town. One recipient asked that we stockpile spare parts instead of making them available just once a year. CRF spent \$1,600 for ten bicycles to enable girls to get to and from the secondary school in Goré. Since later in the year UNHCR provided 100 bicycles to students for the same purpose, this amount could have been saved if we had had better communications with UNHCR.

Solar lamps. CRF provided 700 solar lamps to people with special needs in Belom and Dosseye in 2014. This program is a huge success. No lamps have shown up at the market. UNHCR not only wants 1,000 more, they want to explore the possibility of manufacturing them in Chad.

Solar power at health centers. Ever since installation, maintenance and repairs have been a problem. CRF has executed a retainer arrangement with a technician in Moundou to keep the facilities running. So far, so good.

Medicines & medical equipment. The 65,000 doses of iron sulfate and 59,000 doses of folic acid that CRF shipped from Santa Barbara in May 2014 have, after some struggle with customs, been delivered to CSSI. After discussions with operations personnel at UNHCR, we decided that to avoid customs difficulties we would in the future ship all medical materials to UNHCR rather than to CSSI.