



# **Preventing Impending Violence and Genocide in the Central African Republic**

## **Q&A**

**Version 01**

**January 6, 2016**

**Private Briefing by the Aegis Trust**

## 1. WHAT IS PEACE EDUCATION AND HOW DOES THIS PREVENT GENOCIDE?

In many countries we all talk about education. But we need education that reaches the hearts and minds of people. **Education needs to be different.**

The **continuum of violence** and can be interrupted and turned into a **continuum of benevolence**. This is through development of **empathy** and **critical thinking**, enforcing **personal responsibility** and **resilience**.

This turns bystanders into “upstanders”.

We are not asking people to step in front of a bullet. Violence starts at a small level and each one has a responsibility, a personal responsibility and to step in and prevent this, to turn this into the continuum of benevolence and compassion with each word we say. People discover the power to be resilient even though they have suffered and they have the courage to stand against hatred.

This is what the peace education does. More information is contained at the back of this briefing.

## 2. WHAT WAS THE RESULT OF THE POPE’S VISIT IN NOVEMBER?

The Pope’s visit was a great opportunity for the people. It brought hope to the hearts of the people on both sides. **But if this is not followed up closely then its impact will be lost in the weeks and months ahead.** The past few weeks we have seen increased clashes between the main militia groups, and people have started to be killed again.

We saw this in Rwanda, in 1990 Pope John-Paul visited Rwanda and brought the same kind of hope, but there was not the sustained action to take these messages down to the community level. Whilst it is good to have these words from world leaders, if they are not followed up then there is no lasting impact.

This is why we need to intervene now to use this opportunity and use these powerful messages, drawing also on the peace advocates from Rwanda. This window of opportunity to reinforce and build sustainable peace will close.

### **3. IF THE FUNDS WERE AVAILABLE, WHAT IS THE STRATEGY BEGINNING IN 2016, IN A VERY PRACTICAL WAY?**

The first strategy is **to empower local peacemakers**.

There are networks of young people on both sides that want to bring peace. These are drawn from the inter-religious platform, involving the main religious groups in CAR, evangelical Christians, Catholics and Muslims. The religious leaders have been very united and outspoken for peace. This would include working with their youth networks. These would adapt our approach in Rwanda to draw upon their approaches of faith based teaching, Christian and Muslim.

This will be combined with **use of media to promote these messages more widely**.

The second strategy is to commence work on **peace education with the Ministry of Education, schools and other partners, such as UNICEF**, who has experience in country. We will adapt the programme we have in Rwanda for CAR to be rolled out into schools.

This needs organisation through a locally based team that can support this. We have Alain in CAR at present.

**We need to boost this, to establish a small team of 3-5 persons, with a small office, and arrange for peace advocates to come from Rwanda.**

### **4. WHAT DOES \$2 MILLION ACHIEVE?**

This will:

- **Fund a small resident team for 18 months**
- **Initiate an education programme in CAR, as proven in Rwanda**
- **Secure ongoing funding to sustain this beyond the initial period**

We will **empower local people** through training, train the trainer, events and development of materials to disarm hearts and minds.

We have already established local partnerships with a number of agencies, including Catholic Relief Services, World Vision and others to leverage Aegis' impact.

## 5. WHAT PLANS HAVE YOU IN PLACE TO RAISE \$2 MILLION?

We have secured **\$1.1 million to date.**

- **\$600,000 of funding from USAID** as part of a consortium led by Catholic Relief Services. This will commence in early 2016.
- **Private foundation gifts of \$500,000.**

We will apply to the “EU Bekou fund” for CAR, which will commence later in 2016, and we are in discussions with UNICEF about possible funding.

**We are seeking to raise a further \$400-500,000 through this campaign.** We are seeking gifts from \$100,000 to \$5,000 to initiate the early action that is needed and is critical.

## 6. HOW SUCCESSFUL HAVE THESE BRIEFINGS BEEN?

People have responded positively, inspired by the ability to connect directly with people on the ground in CAR and Rwanda.

The briefings have just began. We will know better on the results during January and February. This is the critical window of time when early action will have the most beneficial impact.

## 7. HOW DOES IT WORK TO HAVE THE LESSONS SHARED FROM RWANDA TO CAR?

Whilst the context in Rwanda and CAR are different, there are lessons that can be applied.

In Rwanda, Aegis became involved after the violence. **But in CAR the genocide has yet to happen, although many people have been impacted by violence.**

We have spoken to many people who have come across Aegis and they really want this to be used in CAR to prevent violence. **People sense that any spark can lead to a major catastrophe. This expertise will disarm hearts and minds, paving the way for wider development.**

The use of storytelling in Rwanda, using stories of peacemakers, is very powerful and is needed in CAR. People have started to learn about the continuum of violence and the continuum of benevolence. **It helps them to understand where they are and how to resolve their own situation.**

## **8. WHAT DOES THE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN RWANDA AND CAR LOOK LIKE FROM AN AEGIS PERSPECTIVE?**

This is the right time we should talk about helping people in CAR, because there are many things in common between people of Rwanda and CAR.

**Rwanda and CAR are both French speaking and share a similar history.** This is a big asset. Even the Muslims and Christians have open hearts to listen to these messages.

**Many people in Rwanda are ignorant of what is happening in CAR, and when they hear about this they really want to help their brothers and sisters in CAR.**

**And people in CAR have a high respect for Rwandans.** You may have heard about the effectiveness of Rwandan troops as part of the UN peacekeeping forces, they are widely respected, because they are human beings with their own experience from Rwanda as well as soldiers.

And even our partners in CAR, they all want to see greater involvement of Rwandans in CAR, because there is an obvious experience they can share.

## **9. HOW WILL AEGIS TRUST COUNTER THE PROPAGANDA BY THE MILITIA GROUPS?**

It is important to understand the power of testimony from Rwandan survivors in CAR to overcome messages of hatred.

We saw this directly, when Freddy was in CAR and gave his own experience from Rwanda, during the genocide and afterwards.

He spoke about how the genocide had such a profound impact upon him and his family, and had destroyed the nation. But that the country had been able to rebuild, and survivors had been able to reconcile with their perpetrators.

This was powerful in terms of community discussions. But also this was shared on the radio, in churches and mosques, and people discussing on the streets, in their cars whilst they travel, and homes with their families. It had a big impact.

For example, at the end of the service a lady around 20 came to Freddy. She had experienced similar, losing a brother, she said: **“you forgave the people that killed over 80 members of your family and rebuilt your country, then we can do the same”.**

**10. WHO OWNS THE RADIO, HOW DO YOU ENSURE SECURITY AND HOW RADIOS CAN BE OVERTAKEN?**

There are many radio stations in CAR. Aegis does not have editorial control, but we can use these existing stations to create critical thinking.

Many radio stations are connected to faith groups, with the second largest linked to the Catholic Church. These faith groups have been very outspoken against the hate propaganda, so at least there is this level of support and some hope to make a difference.

This is why we are so concerned to act quickly, to support those that are advocates for peace, and whilst these media channels remain open to us.

**11. HOW CAN POTENTIAL DONORS BE PLUGGED IN THE LONG TERM, WHAT TYPE OF RESOURCES MAY THEY BE ABLE TO ACCESS, FOR EXAMPLE ENGAGING FAITH LEADERS IN THE US AND ELSEWHERE?**

This is one of the roles that donors can bring, using their leadership through their networks, relationships and funding to enable key actors to collaborate.

On the subject of engaging faith leaders in the US, and elsewhere, this is an excellent point and one we welcome. We have seen that the faith leaders in CAR lack so much knowledge from elsewhere. This would be very helpful to bring peace and reconciliation. We will follow up.

**12. IS THE MAIN FOCUS TO AVERT THE GROWTH OF EXTREMIST GROUPS FROM TAKING HOLD IN CAR?**

The conflict could spawn the development of these more radical groups. This is a matter of when, not if, if the local situation is not resolved.

This is why our focus is to work with key people of influence to resolve the current situation within CAR.

It is the best way to prevent the wider, regional threat. We know that people in CAR are receptive of these positive messages and the time is now to reach them.

If not, then we know that there are the extreme groups outside of CAR just waiting for their opportunity. We will focus our efforts on building local resistance against violence and hate ideology. This is the best way to counter this wider threat.

### **13. WHAT IS THE INTENDED SCALE OF THE INTERVENTION, HOW LONG?**

The immediate need is the next 3 to 6 months, to take the opportunity whilst we have it to build peace through local engagement. If we can take early action and build momentum, then we know we can succeed in the long term.

Aegis is committed to a minimum of 5 years, and this is agreed with our partners. We know that this level of deep, cultural change takes many years, to counter mis-trust and suspicion, but the immediate priority is to deal with the threat of impending violence and genocide.

### **14. HOW DO YOU PROPOSE TO REACH PEOPLE OUTSIDE THE CAPITAL, ESPECIALLY THE MILLION OR SO PEOPLE DISPLACED, INCLUDING THOSE OUTSIDE OF CAR, MANY OF WHICH WILL BE MUSLIM POPULATIONS. HOW DO YOU PROPOSE TO REACH THEM, AND TO REINTEGRATE THEM, AS THIS WILL BE KEY?**

For those that are displaced, the Muslim groups are mainly in Cameroon and in Chad. For the Christian groups they are mainly in Congo, DRC and Congo Brazzaville, and others are internally displaced.

For the Muslim groups in Chad and Cameroon, there is a high risk they will be manipulated. There is also a risk for all groups that return and see their houses destroyed, that they may be filled with hatred and have feelings of revenge.

Currently our programs will be focused in Bangui, but we agree about the need to reach wider groups, especially those in the camps. In the short term we need to get a program running in Bangui and then build from there.

There are wider issues here that UN and humanitarian organisations have capacity to address. This is why Aegis' intervention is to coordinate with other partners so this is a multi-agency intervention.

### **15. HOW CAN WE OBTAIN MORE INFORMATION?**

We are updating our materials on a regular basis. Please get in touch with Glen Ford, Director of Strategic Development at Aegis on [glen.ford@aegistrust.org](mailto:glen.ford@aegistrust.org) or +44 7590 779137.

## **ANNEX: WHAT IS AEGIS' PEACE EDUCATION AND HOW DOES THIS PREVENT VIOLENCE?**

People often ask this question.

***“We need to give this to our people so their minds and hearts can be disarmed”***

Alain Lazaret:

“We really need peace education. In the past few weeks we have had workshops in Bangui with a variety of people, including teachers, headmasters, from the Ministry of Education and UNICEF.

I was talking to them about this, the approach and content, and how this is used for training for trainers and teacher training. I said about how this encourages positive values, personal responsibility and critical thinking, explained about the continuums of violence and benevolence.

They said: “Wow, why did you not do this before, if we had had this it would have helped people, but now you have started, do not delay. Be ready, we are waiting for you – come to our schools, gather us, teach us those values, we need to communicate these values to our children. Because children in CAR are like robots, they do not have sentiment in their hearts because they have experienced such violence, maybe seeing their father or mother killed in front of their eyes.

We need to give this to our people so their minds and hearts can be disarmed and they can be set free from hatred and the bondage of violence and revenge.

This tool of peace education is much welcomed in CAR. The Government, the Ministry of Education, schools, including headmasters, teachers, parents and students are waiting for this.”

***“All teachers should be teachers of peace education - key is the development of critical thinking, empathy and individual responsibility”***

We have a proven methodology that has been developed in Rwanda.

It is a storytelling approach. We use stories of actual peacemakers to inspire others.

This is combined with educational tools to develop critical thinking, empathy and individual responsibility amongst young people and the community. This creates resilience and resistance against violence.

We use concepts such as the continuum of violence that helps people understand how a normal person can become a perpetrator. We use the continuum of benevolence so people understand how a perpetrator can turn into a peacemaker.