

KEY FACTS

Official name: République Centrafricaine (Central African Republic)

Head of State: President Michel Am-Nondokro Djotodia (sworn in 18 Aug 2013)

Head of government: Prime Minister Nicolas Tiangaye (from 17 Jan 2013)

Area: 622,984 square km

Population: 4.86 million (2012)*

Capital: Bangui

Official language: French

Currency: CFA franc (CFAf) = 100 centimes (Communauté Financière Africaine (African Financial Community) franc)

Exchange rate: CFAf495.02 per US\$ (Jul 2013); CFAf655.95 per euro (pegged from Jan 1999)

GDP per capita: US\$447 (2012)

GDP real growth: 4.13% (2012)

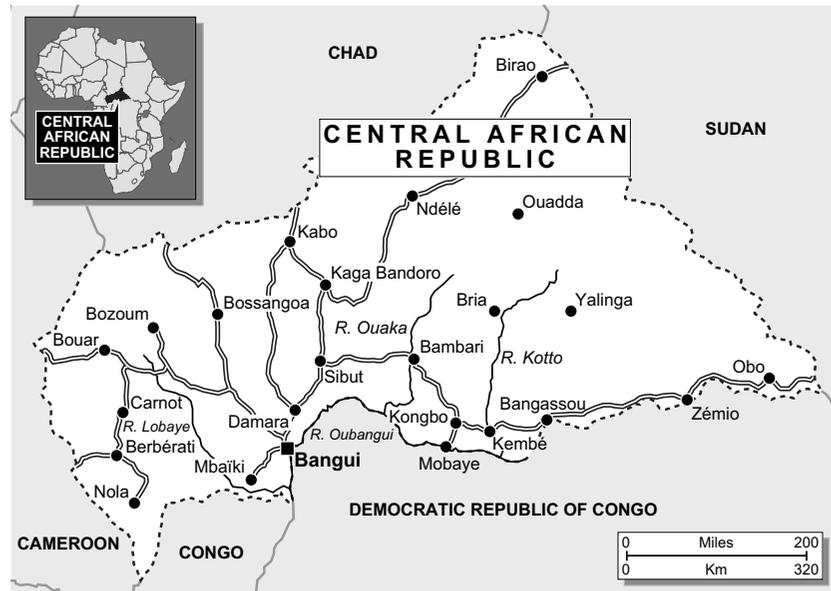
GDP: US\$2.17 billion (2012)

Inflation: 5.23% (2012)

Annual FDI: US\$109.18 million (2011)

* estimated figure

Central African Republic



Rebel attacks launched by Seleka (the Sango word for ‘coalition’) in December 2012 have made the political and security situation of the Central African Republic (CAR) very fragile. As the rebels began to gain ground, the Economic Community of Central African States had organised a conference in Libreville (Gabon) from 9 to 11 January, inviting all parties involved. The peace deal was supposed to put an end to hostilities and create a national unity government led by a prime minister from the opposition grouping – the Collectif des Forces du Changement (CFC) (Combined Forces for Change). Nicolas Tiangaye was put forward for the position and eventually confirmed as prime minister after Seleka had also approved him.

Despite the peace deal signed between Bozizé and Seleka on 11 January in Libreville and the national unity government that was set up, the attacks led to the fall of François Bozizé’s regime on 22 March 2013 and the former president fled to Cameroon.

The leader of the Seleka coalition, Michel Am-Nondokro Djotodia, proclaimed himself President of the Republic on 22 March (although he was not officially sworn in until 18 August) and

announced the suspension of the 27 November 2004 constitution and the dissolution of the National Assembly and the national unity government. He also announced his intention to hold ‘free and fair elections with everybody’s help’ by 2016. Nicolas Tiangaye remained as prime minister. Despite the agreement, there was extensive looting and destruction of public and private property, especially in the capital. The cost of the damage is still difficult to calculate.

In early August UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said the CAR had suffered a ‘total breakdown of law and order’ since rebels seized power in March. He urged the UN Security Council (UNSC) to consider sanctions or to set up a panel of experts to monitor the situation. The UNSC also warned that the CAR posed a ‘serious threat’ to regional stability. On 9 September a large scale force of supporters of former President Bozizé launched an attack on forces loyal to President Djotodia. Reports said that there were at least 60 deaths. The army chief was sacked. Seleka Coalition rebels were reported to be looting and killing civilians. As a result a decree was issued from the President’s office dissolving the Seleka Coalition ‘over the length and breadth of the Central

African Republic's territory.' This led to further uncontrolled violence as gangs of former Seleka Coalition rebels roamed the country. A UN official reported that a worrying new religious dimension to the violence was developing, with armed groups inciting Christian and Muslim communities against each other.

Do not abandon us...

On 26 September, describing the humanitarian situation in his country as 'catastrophic', Prime Minister Tiangaye delivered an impassioned plea from the podium of the United Nations General Assembly for full-scale international support to save his country from the internecine violence tearing it apart.

He called on the UN to play an increased role and the international community to provide the necessary financial, material and logistic support, for a beefed-up African Union (AU)-led force to restore peace and stability to a country that has known little of it for the past four decades.

The disappointing aspect of the falling apart of the CAR is that the country has vast natural resources that have not yet been exploited. Only 700,000 of the 15 million hectares of useful farmland are cultivated. Dense tropical forest covers 34 million hectares, offering great potential for forestry. Mineral resources including diamonds, gold, uranium, iron, calcium and copper are just as significant. These natural resources, however, have not enabled the country to experience economic development involving structural transformation. Instead, agriculture has continued to focus essentially on subsistence food crops and unprocessed cash crops for export. The only mineral resources exploited are diamonds and gold, and they have always been mined by artisanal miners. Only the timber industry has begun to process goods, albeit on a small scale.

The *African Economic Outlook 2013* (AEO), published jointly by the African Development Bank and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, notes that political and strategic errors and poor governance have been compounded by the country's isolation and vast size. Similarly, mediocre infrastructure, the small domestic market and the weak private business sector all contribute to the poorly diversified economy. Manufacturing value added per capita (VAM) fell from US\$21 to US\$16 between 1990 and 2010, affected by political unrest. This contributed to the CAR's

classification as a country in the first phase of industrialisation.

Some progress has, however, been made in improving the institutional framework. The mining and forestry codes have been revised to adapt them to international standards and foster the processing of natural resources. Measures taken over the past few years enabled the country to become compliant with the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) in March 2011 just two years after being admitted as a candidate country. (Membership was, however, withdrawn in April 2013 after the coup.) The government signed a Voluntary Partnership Agreement on Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) with the European Union in 2010. It also joined the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (UN-REDD) for the management of the Congo Basin Forest in 2010. In May 2012, the country's parliament passed a law to create an agency to manage forestry resources.

That was the economy...

Real GDP growth, as reported by the AEO 2013, had stabilised at 3.1 per cent in 2012, below the initial forecast of 4.2 per cent but equivalent to the rate in 2011. Growth did not reach the predicted level because there was a slowdown in the primary and secondary sectors.

The primary sector's poor performance was due to a decline in food-crop production following the late arrival of the rainy season and the worsening security situation during part of the harvest period.

Cash-crop exports had mixed results. Cotton production grew by 10.3 per cent, helped by a project involving Chinese co-operation, but coffee production fell. Timber – the main export product – performed well in 2012 thanks to lumber production, but not as well as in 2011.

The country's GDP sector composition, dominated by the primary sector, has not changed over the past few years. The primary sector contributed more than 50 per cent of GDP in 2012 (food crops alone contributed 28 per cent), the tertiary sector about 30 per cent and the secondary sector nearly 20 per cent.

The government achieved its 2012 budget objective of reducing current primary expenditure to 10.9 per cent of GDP. Total expenditure including net lending was 19.2 per cent of GDP. Domestic resource mobilisation, however, was still very low. Tax revenue fell far short of being able to cover recurrent spending (9.5 per cent of GDP in 2012). It remains well below the ratio of most sub-Saharan African countries. Despite measures to improve revenue administration and efforts to control public expenditure, the budget balance deteriorated. In 2011 there was a deficit of 2.9 per cent of GDP, but in 2012 this expanded to 3.5 per cent.

Inflation remained moderate, at 3.5 per cent, albeit higher than the 2011 rate of 0.7 per cent. Inflation was driven up by agriculture's poor performance and the rise in the prices of imported food. The CAR's continued improvement of its macroeconomic management enabled the government to reach an agreement in June 2012 with the IMF on a three-year economic programme through the Extended

KEY INDICATORS

Central African Republic

	Unit	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Population	m	*4.36	*4.44	*4.63	*4.74	*4.86
Gross domestic product (GDP)	US\$bn	1.99	1.99	1.98	2.17	*2.17
GDP per capita	US\$	458	447	451	489	*447
GDP real growth	%	2.2	2.4	3.3	3.3	*4.1
Inflation	%	9.3	3.5	1.5	1.9	*5.2
Exports (fob) (goods)	US\$m	147.2	135.3	–	–	–
Imports (fob) (goods)	US\$m	308.6	257.1	–	–	–
Balance of trade	US\$m	-161.5	-153.3	–	–	–
Current account	US\$m	-206.0	-154.0	-202.0	-167.0	*-135.0
Total reserves minus gold	US\$m	121.8	210.6	181.2	–	158.0
Foreign exchange	US\$m	121.5	205.9	176.5	–	153.0
Exchange rate	per US\$	447.81	472.19	495.28	466.82	505.65
* estimated figure						

Credit Facility (ECF). Current transfers increased to help improve the current account balance, reducing the deficit from 7.2 per cent of GDP in 2011 to 7.0 per cent in 2012.

The current political climate is likely to hinder the agricultural calendar in 2013, resulting in lower yields. Part of the foreign direct investment (FDI) programmed for the mining sector and certain externally funded agricultural and infrastructure projects could also be affected by the political uncertainties. Growth had been forecast at less than 3.2 per cent in 2013, and will depend largely on how the political landscape and international climate shape up. Inflation, meanwhile, should dip below the 3.0 per cent regional convergence criterion to 2.5 per cent in 2014. It should be noted that forecasts for 2013 and 2014 were made before the recent political turmoil and the fall of President François Bozizé.

Social developments such as eradicating extreme poverty, reducing infant mortality and providing access to basic sanitation remain slow. Some factors did show a marked improvement, including the primary-school enrolment rate, promotion of gender equality, the ratio of girls to boys in primary schools and the supply of drinking water.

Risk assessment

Politics	Disastrous
Economy	Poor
Regional stability	Poor

COUNTRY PROFILE

Historical profile

1889 The French established themselves at Bangui.

1907 The colony of Oubangi-Shari (named after two main rivers) was founded.

1958 The country was proclaimed a republic.

1960 David Dacko became the president of the independent and newly named country.

1966 Dacko's cousin, Jean-Bedel Bokassa, an army commander, seized power, declaring himself life-president in 1972.

1977 Bokassa crowned himself emperor – the coronation consumed about one quarter of the country's annual income.

1979 Bokassa's repressive regime ended when French troops reinstated David Dacko.

1981 Dacko was ousted by the army chief of staff, General André Kolingba.

1986 Kolingba established a one-party state.

1990 Opposition groups united and forced the government to adopt a multi-party system.

1992 Elections were held but the results were nullified after several groups boycotted the poll.

1993 Ange-Félix Patassé became president in the first multi-party elections.

1995 A democratic constitution was adopted.

1996 Army mutinies erupted, the last of which degenerated into ethnic violence and was suppressed by French troops in January 1997.

1997 Patassé appointed Michel Gbezera-Bira at the head of an 11-party coalition government.

1998 Parliamentary elections were indecisive.

1999 A number of deputies defected to Patassé's Mouvement de Libération du Peuple Centrafricain (MLPC) (Movement for the Liberation of the Central African People), giving it a slight majority. Presidential elections confirmed support for Patassé. France withdrew its troops.

2001 Libya sent troops to protect Patassé.

2002 Rebels seized part of Bangui; they were fought off by the army, aided by Libyan warplanes.

2003 General François Bozizé led a military coup that captured Bangui while President Patassé was abroad. Bozizé proclaimed himself president, suspended the constitution and dissolved the National Assembly.

2004 The National Transitional Council created an independent commission to oversee elections. A new constitution was approved.

2005 The Convergence Nationale-Kwa Na Kwa (CN-KNK) (National Convergence-Kwa Na Kwa) coalition won parliamentary elections and incumbent François Bozizé was elected president. Elie Doté was named as prime minister.

2006 President Bozizé ruled by decree for three months. Rebel activity continued throughout the year, causing the president to seek French military assistance.

2007 An agreement was signed between Sudan, Chad and the Central African Republic whereby no shelter would be given to rebel movements between these countries.

2008 Elie Doté resigned and the president appointed Faustin-Archange Touadéra as prime minister. Jean-Pierre Bemba was arrested (in Belgium) on charges that his troops allegedly committed atrocities in the Central African Republic in 2002. He faced charges at the International Criminal Court (ICC). Peace agreements with three rebel groups were signed allowing disarmament and the demobilisation of rebel fighters.

2009 Prime Minister Touadéra and his cabinet were dismissed; the president re-appointed him as head of a national unity cabinet, which included two senior members of two rebel groups and two opposition parliamentary members. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved the immediate payment of US\$18.46 million for poverty reduction programmes, following CAR's successful economic performance under the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF), 2010 Presidential and parliamentary elections were postponed from April to 2011. Troops of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), a brutal and indiscriminate rebel force from Uganda, began attacking villagers in CAR. The reputation of former president Jean-Bedel Bokassa was formally rehabilitated by presidential decree. Although he was accused of great cruelty during his reign, President Bozizé said that Bokassa had 'built the country but we have destroyed what he built'. His widow was awarded a state medal of honour. 2011 In January, in presidential elections, incumbent François Bozizé (Kwa Na Kwa) won 66.08 per cent of the vote, his closest rival Ange-Félix Patassé (independent) won 20.1 per cent. After the second round of parliamentary elections held on 27 March, Kwa Na Kwa won a majority of 61 seats. All opposition parties, including 18 independent candidates, alleged that there had been election fraud. However, the electoral commission confirmed President Bozizé's re-election on 26 January. The government signed a ceasefire agreement with the rebel group, Convention des Patriotes pour la Justice et la Paix (Convention of Patriots for Justice and Peace (CPJP)), in June.

2012 On 7 June two northern rebel groups, the L'Armée Populaire pour la Restauration de la République et la Démocratie (APRD) (Popular Army for the Restoration of Democracy) and the Union des Forces Républicaines (UFR) (Republican Forces Union), were disbanded after a decade long insurgency. They agreed to join the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programme.

2013 President Bozizé fled Bangui ahead of rebels of the Seleka Coalition who took the capital on 24 March. On 25 March Michel Djotodia declared that he would rule by decree. In early August UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said the CAR had suffered a 'total breakdown of law and order' since rebels seized power in March. He urged the UN Security Council (UNSC) to consider sanctions or to set up a panel of experts to monitor the situation. The UNSC also warned that the CAR posed a 'serious threat' to regional stability. On 18 August Michel Am-Nondokro Djotodia was sworn in as president. On 9

September a large scale force of supporters of former President Bozizé launched an attack on forces loyal to President Djotodia. Reports said that there had been at least 60 deaths. The army chief was sacked. Seleka Coalition rebels were reported to be looting and killing civilians. As a result a decree was issued from the President's office dissolving the Seleka Coalition 'over the length and breadth of the Central African Republic's territory.' In October Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) reported that there has been 'appalling' levels of violence since rebels took over in March. In October the UN approved a force of 250 to protect UN workers in CAR. A UN official reported that a worrying new religious dimension to the violence was developing, with armed groups inciting Christian and Muslim communities against each other.

Political structure

Constitution

A new constitution was approved in December 2004.

Form of state

Republic

The executive

Under the new constitution, approved in December 2004, the presidential term has been reduced from six to five years. Presidents can only serve a maximum of two terms in office.

National legislature

The unicameral, National Assembly has 105 members elected in single-seat constituencies using a two-round voting method. All members serve for five-year terms.

Last elections

23 January 2011 (presidential and first round parliamentary); 27 March 2011 (second round parliamentary).

Results: Presidential: François Bozizé (Kwa Na Kwa) won 66.08 per cent of the vote, Ange-Félix Patassé (independent) 20.1 per cent, Martin Ziguélé (MLPC) 6.46 per cent, Emile Gros Raymond Nakombo (RDC) 4.64 per cent, Jean-Jacques Démafouth (APRD) 2.72 per cent; turnout was 54.01 per cent.

Parliamentary: Convergence Nationale 'Kwa Na Kwa' (KNK) (National Convergence) won a total of 61 seats (out of 105), independent candidates 26, Majorité Présidentielle (MP) (Parliamentary Majority) 11, Mouvement de Libération du Peuple Centrafricain (MLPC) (Movement for the Liberation of the Central African People) one, Rassemblement Démocratique Centrafricain (RDC) one. Five other seats were unaccounted for.

Next elections

2016 (presidential and parliamentary)

Political parties

Main opposition party

Collectif des Forces du Changement (CFC) (Combined Forces for Change)

Population

4.86 million (2012)*

Approximately 43 per cent of the total population is under 15 years.

It is estimated that 63 per cent of the total population and 75 per cent of the rural population lives below the poverty line.

Last census: 8 December 2003:

3,151,072

Population density: Five inhabitants per square km. Urban population 39 per cent (2010 Unicef).

Annual growth rate: 2.0 per cent, 1990–2010 (Unicef).

Internally Displaced Persons (IDP)

200,000 (UNHCR 2004)

Ethnic make-up

Bayas (34 per cent), Bandas (27 per cent), Manzas (21 per cent), Saras (10 per cent), Mbums (4 per cent), Mbakas (4 per cent)

Religions

About 24 per cent of the population hold traditional beliefs; 25 per cent Protestants; 25 per cent Catholics; 15 per cent Muslims.

Education

Only 60 per cent of eligible children receive education. Basic education lasts for 10 years divided into six years' basic first stage and four years' basic second stage. General secondary school lasts for three years, which gives access to higher education. Only 10 per cent of secondary school-aged children are enrolled due to limited resources. Technical education at the secondary level is offered at two levels. School instruction is primarily in French, but the government has sought to promote Sango literacy and encourages its use in schools.

Higher education is offered at the Université de Bangui, which also has a teacher training college.

Literacy rate: 49 per cent adult rate; 59 per cent youth rate (15–24) (Unesco 2005).

Compulsory years: Six to 14

Health

Modern healthcare facilities exist only in Bangui (with one major hospital) and a few other towns.

In 2004, CAR launched a 10-year programme to reduce maternal deaths and infant mortality rates.

HIV/Aids

In 2009 there were an estimated 130,000 adults living with HIV.

HIV prevalence: 4.7 per cent aged 15–49 in 2009 (Unicef 2012)

Life expectancy: 48 years, 2010 (Unicef 2012)

Fertility rate/Maternal mortality rate:

4.6 births per woman, 2010 (Unicef 2012); maternal mortality 1,100 per 100,000 live births (World Bank).

Child (under 5 years) mortality rate

(per 1,000): 129 per 1,000 live births (WHO 2012); 23 per cent of children under aged five are malnourished (World Bank).

Welfare

The country is in deep poverty, with two out of three people earning less than US\$1 a day. All social security programmes are administered by the Central African Social Security Office.

Main cities

Bangui (capital, estimated population 734,350 in 2012), Bimbo (250,195), Berbérati (105,155), Carnot (54,551), Bria (43,322), Bambari (41,486), Nola (41,462).

Languages spoken

Sango, Banda, Baye and Zanda are widely spoken.

Official language/s

French

Media

Despite the repeal of press laws the resulted in criminal prosecution, journalist are still subject to harassment and imprisonment by government ministers.

Press

The press does not have a great influence due to the relatively costliness of newspapers and high levels of illiteracy.

Dailies: In the Sango-language *E Le Songo* is state-owned. In French, *Le Confident* (www.leconfident.net), is a private publication as are *Le Citoyen*, *L'Hirondelle* *Le Démocrate* and *L'Evenementiel*.

Weeklies: In French, *Centrafrique Presse* (www.centrafrique-presse.com) is a published newsletter, twice a week. There are several private newspapers including, *Les Collines de l'Oubangui*, *Temps Nouveaux*, and *Le Centrafricain*,

Periodicals: In French, *Journal Officiel de la République Centrafricaine* is a government publication.

Broadcasting

Radio: The state-owned Radio Centrafrique (www.radiocentrafrique.org) does not provide independent news, alternatively, Radio Ndeke Luka (www.radiondekeluka.org), a UN-sponsored station provides a balanced output and international rebroadcasts from France, UK and US.

Other radio stations and signals are provided by international organisations, including the pan-African, Radio Africa No 1 (www.africa1.com), the French Radio

Nostalgie and the Roman Catholic Radio Notre Dame.

Television: Television Centrafricaine is state-run and the private, Tropic RTV, is the only other broadcaster.

National news agency: Centrafrique Presse

Other news agencies: Africa News Agency: www.africanewsagency.co.uk
APA: www.apanews.net
Panapress: www.panapress.com

Economy

The Central African Republic (CAR) is one of the poorest and least developed countries in the world. Its economy is dominated by subsistence agriculture, forestry and fishing, which constituted 55.2 per cent of GDP in 2008, and hadn't changed by 2011. Forestry is a major export revenue earner and is the single largest employer in the CAR, drawing on over 27 million hectares of exploitable forests. Major crops include, cotton, food crops (such as maize, cassava and yams), coffee and tobacco. However, the sector is vulnerable to drought and regional political strife. The service sector led by government services and transport, comprised less than 30 per cent of GDP and industry less than 15 per cent of GDP. Mining is largely underdeveloped, but there are deposits of gold, uranium and other minerals. Diamond mining is the second largest export earner, but it has been estimated that 30 per cent of all diamond production is illegally smuggled abroad. GDP growth was estimated at 3.3 per cent in 2010, an increase from the 1.7 per cent in 2009, as the export of commodities finally picked up by 10 per cent in 2010 (after two years of negative growth). The projected GDP growth rate in 2011 was 3.1 per cent, rising to 4.1 per cent in 2012 with the volume of commodity exports projected to rise by 21 per cent in 2011 and 14.6 per cent in 2012. In 2011 the UN Human Development Report ranked CAR at 179 out of 187, for national development in health, education and income. Since 2005, CAR's progress has grown but has not matched the degree of improvement of other sub-Saharan countries in Africa. In 2010, 59.3 per cent of the population experienced at least one indicator of poverty, while 62.8 per cent lived on less than the equivalent of US\$1.25 per day; the headcount poverty rate was 86.4 per cent of the population (2000–10). Poverty is hindering development, as the workforce is largely unskilled with only half of the population over 15 years of age literate. Serious reform is necessary to attract foreign investment. The economy would be enhanced by improved transport facilities and domestic reforms by the government.

Under pressure from the World Bank and the IMF, CAR has privatised state-owned enterprises and introduced other measures to encourage investment and combat corruption.

External trade

The Central African Republic is a member of the Communauté Économique et Monétaire de l'Afrique Centrale (Cemac) (Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa), which operates a customs union with import taxes and capital flowing freely among member states; import duties, levied on third parties, are pooled and shared between members.

International trade is largely based on the export of timber, (around 50 per cent of export earnings) and diamonds, although it is estimated that 30 per cent of all production is illegally smuggled abroad. There is a potential for a great deal more in mineral exports but a poor investment record and weak infrastructure hampers progress.

Imports

Principal imports are food, textiles, chemicals and pharmaceuticals, petroleum products, machinery, vehicles and electrical equipment.

Main sources: South Korea (typically 19 per cent of total), France (12 per cent), Cameroon (7 per cent).

Exports

Principal exports are timber, diamonds, gold, coffee, and natural rubber, tobacco, cotton and leather.

Main destinations: Belgium (typically 33 per cent of total), China (10 per cent), Indonesia (10 per cent).

Agriculture

Agriculture and forestry are the mainstays of the economy. Total agricultural land is 62.3 million hectares of which 5.1 per cent is pasture and 3.1 per cent arable; much of the rest is savannah. The sector employs 63 per cent of the workforce. Around 12 per cent of the total land is arable; much of the rest is savannah. The sector consists mainly of subsistence farming and animal husbandry. The main crops are maize, cassava, sorghum, groundnuts, sesame and rice. Cotton and tobacco are also cultivated. The main export crop is coffee. Production is hampered by soil erosion, widespread drought and underdeveloped marketing and infrastructure, as well as poor internal security and mass migration. Forest covers 50 per cent of the country. There is significant forestry potential, including over 60 species of commercially viable trees, but it is under-exploited because of poor transport infrastructure.

Industry and manufacturing

The industrial sector typically accounts for around 18 per cent of GDP and employs 9 per cent of the workforce. Manufacturing accounts for around 9 per cent of GDP.

Manufacturing is relatively small-scale and is concentrated in the brewing, tanning, food processing, soap manufacture and textile sectors. There are also import substitution industries such as motor cycle and bicycle assembly.

The main industrial centre is the Bangui district.

Tourism

Although the Central African Republic (CAR) has many natural sights to offer visitors, its unstable political situation has led to warnings by foreign governments to their citizens not to visit CAR due to the lawlessness of insurgents and foreign militia. At the moment CAR cannot look to tourism to improve its economy. Visitors mainly arrive for business purposes. Nevertheless, there is potential for the industry when security improves, and eco-tourism in the national parks can expand. The Manovo-Gounda St Floris National Park, of savannah and northern floodplains, contains a wide variety of African wildlife and is included on the Unesco's World Heritage List. A new website is in operation that provides information about CAR (www.centrafricaine.info).

Travel and tourism typically constitutes around 4 per cent of GDP, and provides employment for around 82,500 or 3.5 per cent of the total workforce. CAR needs major investment in infrastructure before it can hope to expand and capitalise on its potential in tourism. But without the security necessary to protect not only its own people but visitors as well, prospects are limited.

Mining

The mining sector officially accounts for around 4 per cent of GDP, employs 3 per cent of the workforce and generates 40 per cent of the country's export earnings. Smuggling is endemic and production and trade is likely to be far higher than official estimates.

Around 80,000 autonomous artisanal miners are engaged in mining production, mostly of diamonds and gold. Diamond output is around 500,000 carats per year, over half of which are gem quality. Other mineral deposits include uranium, limestone, iron ore, copper and manganese. The Bozizé government withdrew mining licences and seized mines belonging to foreigners and figures associated with the government of former president Patassé. The measures were taken as part of an anti-corruption campaign which targeted

divested interests associated with vital revenue-generating sectors.

Hydrocarbons

There are no known exploitable oil or gas reserves, but exploration is being undertaken in regions where the geology gives rise to high expectations of deposits, typically crossing international borders. Domestic consumption was 2,000 barrels per day in 2008, all of which was imported. The Central African Republic does not have any oil refining capacity. There are no known reserves of natural gas; coal reserves are negligible and any amounts being imported or consumed are not recorded.

Energy

Total installed generating capacity was 40MW in 2007, producing 110 million kilowatt hours (kWh), little of which is provided to the general population. The state-owned Energie Centrafricaine (Enerca) is responsible for electricity generation and operates the Boali, M'Bali and Gamboula hydroelectric dams, which between them provide 19MW; an additional 137MW is planned through a mixture of upgrading and expansion or existing plants, and by new ones. There are small-scale, isolated diesel generators providing the majority of the country's community needs. The majority of the population relies on non-commercial biomass, mostly fuel wood for cooking, lighting and power.

Power lines cross the border into the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) from where power is accessed.

In February 2009 the World Bank approved a grant of US\$8 million to help rehabilitate the power infrastructure, including hydropower facilities, such as the Boali hydroelectric dam, to ensure more reliable supplies.

Financial markets

Stock exchange

Afribourse (Bourse Régionale des Valeurs Mobilières) (BRVM)

Banking and insurance

Central bank

Banque des Etats de l'Afrique Centrale

Main financial centre

Bangui

Time

GMT plus one hour

Geography

The Central African Republic is a landlocked country in the heart of equatorial Africa. It is bounded by Chad to the north, and Sudan to the east, by the Republic of Congo and the Democratic Republic of Congo to the south and Cameroon to the west.

Most of the land is rolling or flat plateau, apart from the rising land in the west.

Around 36 per cent of the country is covered in tropical forest particularly in the south-west. Desertification in the north-east has resulted in scrubland. The Chari River runs through the centre from the east.

Hemisphere

Northern

Climate

Hot all year with temperatures up to 36 degrees Celsius. The dry season runs from November–February with cooler nights. The rainy season runs from May–October.

Entry requirements

Passports

Required by all

Visa

Visas are required by all except citizens of surrounding countries, Israel and Switzerland. Visas can be issued in neighbouring countries, generally within 24 hours but are expensive. Visas can be obtained in advance from the Central African Republic Embassy in Paris, 30 rue des Perchamps, 75116 Paris.

A business letter and itinerary must accompany the application for a business visa.

Proof of onward/return passage is required.

Currency advice/regulations

No restrictions on import of foreign currency, but amounts must be declared; export up to declared amount allowed.

Unlimited import of local currency; export limited to CFAf75,000.

Health (for visitors)

Mandatory precautions

Yellow fever vaccination certificate required by all.

Advisable precautions

Typhoid, tetanus, hepatitis A and polio vaccinations are recommended. Malaria prophylaxis should be taken as risk exists throughout country. There is a rabies risk. Water precautions are necessary – bilharzia risk in some areas. AIDS risk.

Hotels

Good standard hotels are available in Bangui – limited accommodation elsewhere. Where service charge is not included in bill a 10 per cent tip is usual.

Public holidays (national)

Fixed dates

1 Jan (New Year's Day), 29 Mar (President Boganda's Remembrance Day), 1 May (Labour Day), 30 Jun (Prayer Day), 13 Aug (Independence Day), 15 Aug (Assumption Day), 1 Nov (All Saints' Day), 1 Dec (National Day), 25 Dec (Christmas Day).

Variable dates

Easter Monday

Working hours

Banking

Mon–Fri: 0730–1230.

Business

Mon–Fri: 0730–1530.

Government

Mon–Fri: 0700–1200, 1430–1700; Sat: 0700–1200.

Shops

(Mon–Sat) 0800–1200; 1600–1900.

Telecommunications

Mobile/cell phones

A GSM 900 service is available in limited areas.

Electricity supply

220/380V AC, 50 cycles

Weights and measures

Metric system

Security

Full civil control following the 2003 coup has yet to be restored. Visitors are recommended not to travel to the Central African Republic unless it is absolutely necessary. When travelling outside the capital extra precautions should be taken and advice sort from local authorities and diplomatic missions.

Getting there

Air

National airline: Air France and Sudan Airways serve CAR.

International airport/s: Bangui-M'Poko (Code: BGF), 4km from city, restaurant, post office, shops, car hire.

Getting about

National transport

Air: Small light aircraft can be chartered.

Road: Eight main roads run from Bangui to the main towns and those that are surfaced are toll roads. The Trans-African Lagos-Mombasa highway passes through the Central African Republic. Most other roads can become impassable during rainy season. NB Spare parts and petrol stations tend to be rare outside Bangui.

Buses: Limited coach service operates between Bangui and Bangassou.

Water: Large volume of freight is carried on rivers. The principal trading route is on the Oubangui River south of the capital Bangui which runs into the River Congo, connecting Bangui to the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Congo Republic (including Brazzaville, from where railway runs to Pointe-Noire). Also services from Salo on the Sangha River.

City transport

Taxis: Available in Bangui; fares by negotiation.

Car hire

Self- or chauffeur-driven cars available. International driving licence required.

BUSINESS DIRECTORY

The addresses listed below are a selection only. While World of Information makes every endeavour to check these addresses, we cannot guarantee that changes have not been made, especially to telephone numbers and area codes. We would welcome any corrections.

Telephone area codes

Dialling code for Central African Republic: IDD access code +236 followed by subscriber's number.

Chambers of Commerce

Chambre de Commerce, d'Industrie, des Mines et d'Artisanat de Centrafrique, PO Box 252/ 813, Bangui (tel: 611.668; fax: 613-561; e-mail: ccima@intnet.cf).

Chambre de d'Agriculture, d'Elevage, des Eaux, Forêts, Chasses, Pêches et du Tourisme, PO Box 850, Bangui (tel:/fax: 619-052; e-mail: denissio@intnet.cf).

Banking

Banque de Crédit Agricole et de Développement, BP 801, Place de la République, Bangui (tel: 613-200).

Banque Internationale pour le Centrafrique, BP 910, Place de la République, Bangui (tel: 610-042; fax: 616-136, 613-438).

Banque Populaire Maroc-Centrafricaine, BP 844, Rue Guerlliot, Bangui (tel: 613-190, 611-290; fax: 616-230).

Caisse Nationale d'Epargne, BP 839, Siège social, Bangui (tel: 612-296).

Commercial Bank Centrafrique SA, BP 839, Rue de Brazza, Bangui (tel: 612-990; fax: 613-454).

Central bank

Banque des États de l'Afrique Centrale, Direction Nationale, PO Box 851, Bangui (tel: 612-405; fax: 611-995; e-mail: beacbgf@beac.int).

Stock exchange

Afribourse (Bourse Régionale des Valeurs Mobilières) (BRVM), www.brvm.org

Travel information

Central African Republic Government (with tourism information): www.centrafricaine.info

Inter-RCA, BP 1413, Bangui.

Ministry of Water, Forests, Wildlife, Fisheries and Tourism, Bangui.

Office Centrafricain de Tourisme (OCATOUR), BP 655, Bangui (tel: 614-566).

Ministries

Central African Republic Government: www.centrafricaine.info

Ministry of Economy and Finance, Planning and International Co-operation, Bangui (tel: 610-811).

Ministry of Energy, Mines, Geology and Water Resources, Bangui.

Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications, Bangui (tel: 612-946).

Ministry of Rural Development, Bangui (tel: 612-800).

Ministry of Trade, Industry and Small- and Medium-scale Enterprises, Bangui (tel: 614-488).

Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation, Bangui (tel: 612-307).

Other useful addresses

Central African Republic Embassy (USA), 1618 22nd Street, NW, Washington DC 20008 (tel: 202-483-7800; fax: 202-332-9893).

European Development Fund, BP 1298, Bangui (tel: 613-053, 610-113).

Office of the President, Palais de la Renaissance, Bangui (tel: 610-323).

Société Centrafricaine de Développement Agricole (SOCADA), ave David Dacko, BP 997, Bangui (tel: 613-033).

National news agency: Centrafrique Presse

(email: info@centrafrique-presse.com; internet: www.centrafrique-presse.com).

Other news agencies: Africa News Agency: www.africanewsagency.co.uk

APA: www.apanews.net

Panapress: www.panapress.com

Internet sites

Africa Business Network: www.ifc.org/abn

AllAfrica.com: http://allafrica.com

African Development Bank: www.afdb.org

Africa Online: www.africaonline.com

Mbendi AfroPaedia (information on companies, countries, industries and stock exchanges in Africa): http://mbendi.co.za

Central African Republic Government: www.centrafricaine.info