



## **AFRICA/REPUBLIC OF CENTRAL AFRICA - Lessons under the trees for Ouande school students in Linguiri village**

Linguiri (Agenzia Fides) – Decades of political violence in the north of the Central African Republic have caused destruction on a vast scale and massive numbers of displaced persons. Even the education sector has been badly affected by a dire shortage of teachers and adequate physical infrastructure. According to information sent to Fides, thousands of children attend classes, not in solid buildings of brick, but in rudimentary “bush schools”. For about 200 pupils of the primary school Ecole Ouande, in the Linguiri Village in the northeast of the country, lessons are conducted under a big tree with five pupils sharing each wooden desk. During the rainy season, mainly from May to October, lessons are interrupted. And because of a lack of space, children have to alternate morning and afternoon sessions as classes are combined.

Lessons commenced to be held in this manner following a bushfire in late 2010 when the school was burnt down. There is no water and no toilets for the students and food distribution stopped months ago. Many of the pupils attending schools in the area were forced to flee their homes due to the conflict between rebel groups and government forces, and are now living in informal settlements in and around the village.

According to UNICEF, there are more than 5,000 children of primary-school age and a total of 19 schools in the prefecture of M'Brès, 10 built of semi-perishable materials. Among the 76 teachers, 40 are pupils' parents, without any sort of qualification.

In line with the Country's statistics, where there is one teacher for every 94 students, Ecole Ouande has two teachers and a trainee who is unpaid. Humanitarian aid agencies have contributed to the construction of about 800 schools in the north-east of the Country, two-thirds of them “bush schools”, and have given basic teacher training to some 2,000 parents. (AP) (24/2/2011 Agenzia Fides)