

## AD HOC UPDATE #12: New Influx of Refugees from the Central African Republic to the Democratic Republic of Congo

15 June 2021

### Highlights

- As of 15 June 2021, **UNHCR and CNR have relocated a total of 1,708 CAR refugees from Yakoma to the Modale settlement, North Ubangi Province.**
- Between 24 and 28 May, UNHCR and CNR distributed **refugee identity cards to 595 CAR refugees** in Yakoma and Modale.
- Between 18 and 27 May, UNHCR, WFP and ADSSE carried out **joint distributions of cash assistance for core relief items to 13,301 CAR refugees and 1,432 host community members** in Limasa, Gomba, Yakoma and Modale in North Ubangi Province.
- Between 27 and 30 May **UNHCR and ADSSE distributed core relief items to 10,385 CAR refugees** in Zongo, Sambolola and Congo-Rive, South Ubangi Province.



*A newly registered CAR refugee woman receives core relief items during distributions organized by UNHCR and ADSSE in South Ubangi ©UNHCR/ Angela Ghansah*

## L2 Emergency Declaration

On 21 January, a Level 2 emergency has been declared for the UNHCR Operation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This decision is designed to scale up UNHCR operations' preparedness and response activities in addressing the protection needs of refugees and other populations affected by the new crisis.

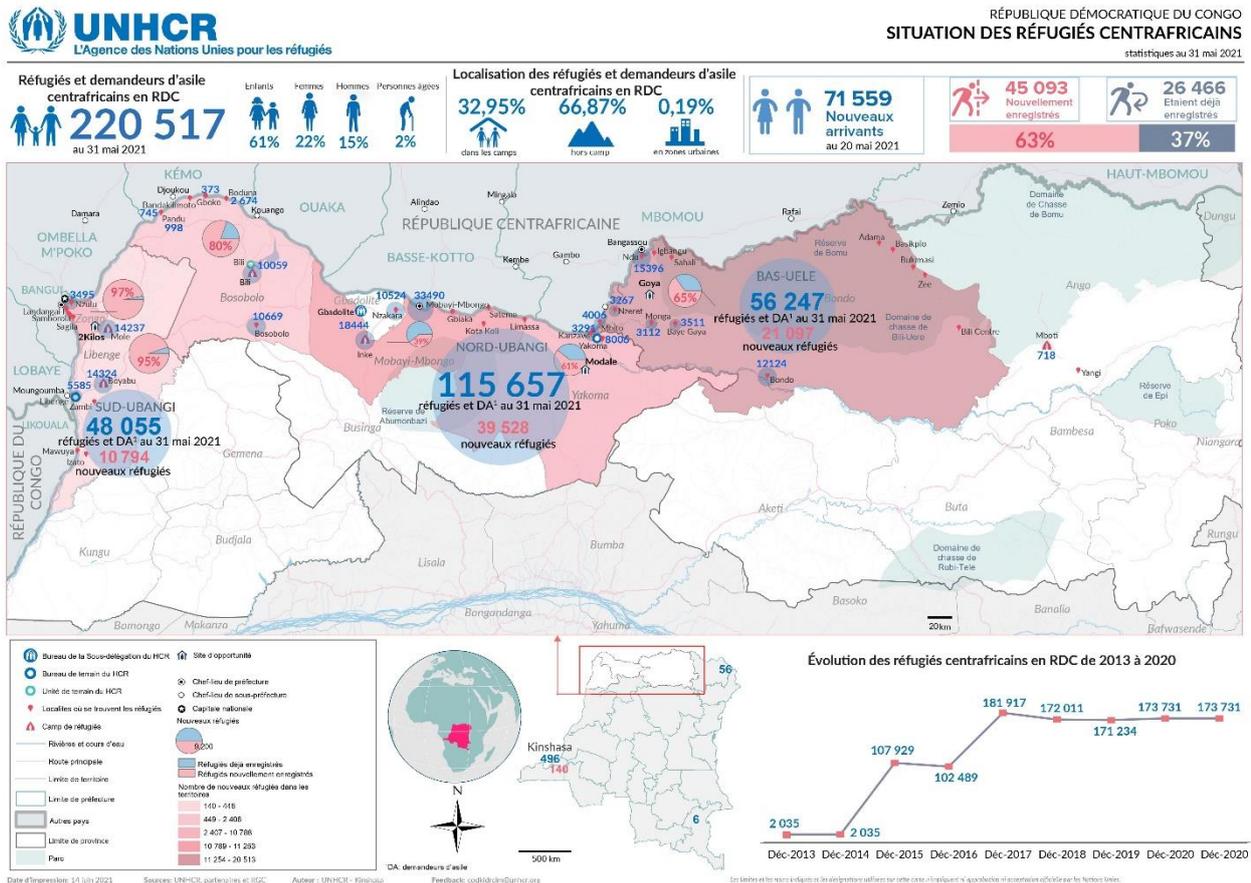
### I- EMERGENCY OVERVIEW

Following contestations of Touadera's second term appointment as President of the Central African Republic in March 2021, the security situation in the country remains tense and characterized by sporadic violence. A state of emergency was declared by government authorities on 21 January until August 2021 together with a night curfew between 6pm and 5am. The national armed forces continue to carry out counter-insurgency operations together with their allies. Whilst the military has regained control over the majority of the territory, the coastline areas in front of Bosobolo territory (Nord Ubangi Province) are reported to be still in control of rebel groups, with sporadic incursions in DRC territory and frequent security incidents.

Until May 2021 CAR families have fled their homes, with many seeking refuge in spontaneous sites along the banks of the Ubangi river in DRC. They have reported recurrent human rights violations against civilians and looting in their home villages in CAR. The majority of them are women and children, while there are also many persons with special needs, such as elderly persons at risk, persons with disabilities and survivors of SGBV.

Over the past months, UNHCR has been working with Congolese authorities to monitor the security situation at the borders and to relocate CAR refugees to villages further inland which meets the minimum standards of security.

Figure 1: Entry points of newly arrived families from the Central African Republic



## II- STATISTICS & KEY FIGURES

According to local authorities, **92,053 individuals from the Central African Republic** have arrived in the DRC since December 2020 (this figure is yet to be verified). This includes an estimated **46,659 individuals in Bas Uele Province**, **35,331 in North Ubangi Province** and **10,063 in South Ubangi Province** according to local authorities. Most of the new arrivals have stayed close to the borders in some 40 villages along the banks of the river separating the Central African Republic from the DRC. Biometric registration has been carried out in several locations along the border. As of 21 May 2021, a total of **71,559 individuals (19,636 households)** have been registered by UNHCR and CNR in various locations.

The newly arrived refugees are distributed across three provinces as follows: **39,528 individuals in North Ubangi** (Yakoma, Limasa, Satema, Kota Koli, Bassapekambo, Nganza, Gomba Lego, Nzakara, Pandu, Bandakilimoto, Boduna, Sidi, Bangeri/Banga, Dokove/Gboko), **21 097 individuals in Bas Uele** (Ndu, Yele, Bangalo, Ibangu, Yangi, Sahali, Bili Centre, Basikipio, Adama, Bulumasi, Zee), **10,794 in South Ubangi** (Sagila, Mbay, Vigilant, Nzomboto, Samborola, Congo rivière, Nzulu, Libenge, Mawuya, Zambi, Izato) as well as **140 in Kinshasa**. 63% of these individuals are new refugees, while 37% of them are people who had previously been registered in the UNHCR database.

## KEY FIGURES

**71,559**

CAR refugees registered in the  
DRC since December 2021

**63%**

Of the newly registered  
individuals are new refugees

**1,743**

Unaccompanied refugee children  
identified



*A refugee family is interviewed in Sidi, Nord Ubangi Province, before being biometrically registered by UNHCR and CNR. ©UNHCR/ Vittoria Moretti*

## III- PROTECTION NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

**The greatest needs of the new arrivals regard food, shelter, health care, documentation, access to drinking water, education, core relief items, livelihoods and sanitation to prevent the spread of the coronavirus and epidemic diseases.**

- Poor living conditions and insufficient sources of livelihood continue to put newly arrived CAR refugee women and girls at risk of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). In the month of May, 30 new cases of SGBV were documented in Modale, Bili, Libenge and Zongo (North and South Ubangi Provinces respectively), bringing the total number of identified and documented survivors to 136, since the new influx started. A majority of the incidents occurred on CAR territory.
- There is an urgent need for hygiene kits to support women and girls of childbearing age to practice good menstrual hygiene and to reduce vulnerabilities to SGBV that could be caused by negative coping mechanisms in the absence of means of providing for basic hygiene items.
- Access to health services remain challenging. In the Modale settlement, an ambulance is urgently needed to transport refugees with serious health conditions to the Wasolo Hospital, 25km away. This will improve access to quality health care, especially for pregnant women. For now, they are mostly dependent on bicycles or motorbikes which poses further risks given the extremely degraded roads in the area.
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- Risks of Covid-19 infections remain high in Ndu (Bas Uele Province) due to its proximity to Bangassou (CAR) where over 83 confirmed cases and three deaths have been reported in the last few weeks. Advocacy needs to be strengthened with the Congolese government and local authorities to provide a more robust response to the pandemic.
- There is need to support local health structures in border localities hosting new CAR refugees with rapid Covid-19 tests kits. These structures are poorly equipped and often run out of essential drugs and hospital material
- Emergency shelters are needed to provide decent and safe living conditions for a majority of new arrivals who live in makeshift shelters along the riverbanks with no access to livelihood means, nor to healthcare facilities. The current rains have worsened conditions among these refugees, exposing them to weather hazards. Some shelters have already been destroyed by strong winds and torrential rains.
- There is an urgent need for the rehabilitation and construction of boreholes and other water sources to provide drinking water for newly arrived CAR refugees. Most of them are currently dependent on water from streams and rivers which pose considerable health risks.
- School facilities needs to be rehabilitated and improved to provide emergency education services in host communities to accommodate new CAR refugee children.
- Farming and fishing equipment, as well as vocational training, are needed to strengthen self-reliance of refugees and to improve the resilience of impoverished host communities.
- There is an urgent need for emergency sanitation facilities such as community latrines and showers to prevent the spread of diseases and to protect the intimacy of refugees, especially women and girls who face increased risks of SGBV when they share sanitary facilities with men.
- Logistics challenges remain a major concern, as most of the hosting locations have extremely degraded or non-existing roads, compounded by the rainy season. This is already taking its toll on the work of UNHCR field offices and implementing partners, as activities are sometimes interrupted or severely delayed because motorbikes and vehicles breakdown regularly and cannot be quickly repaired due to the difficulties in finding replacing parts. In addition, the extremely bad road networks and disrupted facilities increase the likelihoods of accidents, thus posing serious risks to the safety of humanitarian workers.
- UNHCR continues to raise funds to airlift more emergency equipment from Kinshasa to remote locations such as Yakoma. Warehouse stocks are also needed.

## IV- MULTISECTORAL RESPONSE



### PROTECTION

- In May, UNHCR and the CNR carried out biometric registration of over 11,000 newly arrived refugees in Pandu, Bondakilimoto, Boduna, Sidi, Gbagir, Gbandi and Dokova, Bosobolo Territory, North Ubangi Province. As of 21 May 2021, a total of 71,559 individuals (19,636 households) have been registered in various locations, including 39,528 persons (10,340 households) in North Ubangi Province, 10,794 individuals (3,032 households) in South Ubangi Province, 21,097 persons (6,186 households) in Bas Uele Province and 140 persons (78 households) in Kinshasa.  
From 21 to 24 May, UNHCR participated in a joint security evaluation mission involving the CNR and police authorities (DGM, ANR and PNC) to the localities of Gbandi-rive, Mango, Bakundu and Degba, South Ubangi Province, following reports from local authorities of the arrival of more asylum-seekers from the Central African Republic. They reported an estimated 1,000 persons in the zone. A similar joint monitoring mission was also conducted in Lembo, North Ubangi, where they found an estimated 100 new asylum-seekers from CAR. UNHCR is planning biometric registration and verification in these localities.
- UNHCR and CNR are carrying out intention surveys among CAR refugees currently camped on islands or the banks along the DRC/CAR border, notably in Gomba and Limasa and in Bosobolo territory, to determine refugees' willingness to move further inland to sites where they would be safer from possible attacks by armed groups. This would also allow them to have better access to social and economic services such as schools and hospitals. This service will also inform decisions on voluntary repatriations. On 01 June 2021, UNHCR and CNR carried out a joint mission to Molegbe, a potential site for the relocation of new CAR refugees, situated some 15km from Gbadolite, North Ubangi Province. The team met with local authorities and host community leaders to discuss the potential use of land for the construction of social infrastructures by UNHCR and CAR refugees.

- UNHCR and its partners continued relocation of registered CAR refugees from Yakoma to the Modale settlement in North Ubangi Province. As of 15 June 2021, bi-weekly convoys have transported a total of 1,708 individuals (409 households) to the site since the operation was launched on 17 April 2021. Newly relocated refugees have received solar lamps, mosquito nets, soap and tarpaulins upon arrival at the site.
- UNHCR and partners have identified a total of 1,743 unaccompanied CAR refugee children in North Ubangi, South Ubangi and Bas Uele during biometric registration, protection monitoring, multisectoral evaluation missions and home visits. UNHCR and partners are providing multiple assistance to these children, including best interest procedures, placement in host families, medical and psychosocial support and sporting activities. In Yakoma, North Ubangi province, UNHCR and ADSSE donated second-hand clothing items to 30 separated and unaccompanied children, while five others were referred to the Yakoma hospital for treatment.
- To strengthen protection for refugee children, a local NGO, APEE, working under UNHCR leadership received 704 CAR refugee and Congolese children at Child Friendly Spaces (CFS) in Ndayo and Nganzamba on the outskirts of Yakoma, North Ubangi Province. APEE offered psychosocial assistance to these children, including 11 of them who benefited from individual counselling sessions
- Between 31 May and 06 June, UNHCR and CNR distributed refugee identity cards to 36 more refugees in Yakoma and Modale, bringing to 650, the total number of individuals who have received these IDs since the distributions began on April 2021.
- 38 CAR refugee children at risk of statelessness identified by UNHCR in the localities of Gomba, Limassa and Modale, North Ubangi Province were referred to the CNR to advocate for their registration by the civil registry office.
- UNHCR and partners have been providing multiple assistance to all SGBV survivors in locations hosting new arrivals. Between 24 and 28 May, AIDES and other partners held six SGBV awareness raising sessions and a door to door campaign in the localities of Yakoma, Modale (North Ubangi), Monga and Kanzawi (Bas Uele) reaching an estimated 950 refugees and host community members. The two NGOs are also providing medical and psychosocial support to all survivors, distributing hygiene kits and second-hand clothes.



*A CAR refugee family is being relocated to Modale site.  
©UNHCR/ Vittoria Moretti*



## EDUCATION

- UNHCR partner ADSSE has facilitated the enrolment of 383 children of school age relocated to Modale site in the Wele primary school, already hosting to 416 Congolese pupils. In addition, AIRD has built additional six classrooms in emergency material, while AIDES donated 130 benches to improve the learning environment for both refugees and their hosts



## CASH-BASED INTERVENTIONS (CBI)

- Between 18 and 27 May, UNHCR, WFP and ADSSE carried out joint distributions of cash for the purchase of core relief items (CRIs) to a total of 13,301 CAR refugees and 1432 individual host community members in Limasa, Gomba, Yakoma and Modale in North Ubangi Province.



## SHELTER AND CORE RELIEF ITEMS (CRIs)

- UNHCR and its partners are continuing works on emergency infrastructures at the Modale site to accommodate more refugees being relocated. As of 29 May 2021, a total of 403 family emergency shelters have already been completed out of a target number of 700
- UNHCR and partner ADSSE distributed CRIs comprising blankets, sleeping mats, mosquito nets, buckets and jerry cans to a total of 10,385 (2,077 households) CAR refugees out of a target 2,186 households in Zongo, Sambolola and Congo-Rive, South Ubangi Province. These distributions will improve living conditions among some of the new arrivals, whom until now have been living in precarious conditions.
- UNHCR and ADSSE distributed tarpaulins to 5,153 (1,332 households) including and a few host community members, whose shelters had been destroyed by strong winds and torrential rains earlier during the month. Other victims of the storm in south Ubangi province remain in need of similar assistance.
- UNHCR partner World Vision also completed the distribution of core relief items to an additional estimated 1500 individuals (300 households) CAR refugees and host community members with special needs, in the localities of Sagila, Congo Rive and Zongo Centre.



## WATER AND SANITATION

- In Modale settlement, the transit health centre and 100 latrines have been completed as of 09 June and are now fully functional, while 15 additional latrines are under construction and 37 handwashing stations have been set up by UNHCR partners.
- UNHCR partner ACTED is building a fourth water point at the Modale settlement to improve portable water supply to newly relocated CAR refugees. Between 31 May and 06 June, a water management committee was set up at the site, while 40 handwashing kits were provided to persons with special needs.



## HEALTH

- Health and nutrition screenings carried out by AIDES in the six locations where registrations have taken place in the three provinces, revealed and estimated 375 children suffering from malnutrition, including over 85 cases of severe acute malnutrition. Living conditions in these locations have not improved over the past few weeks, meaning more children risk malnutrition. About 14 new CAR refugee children were admitted to the nutrition programme in Yakoma between the 31 May and 06 June.
- in Yakoma, a Covid-19 prevention and response committee for humanitarian workers was set up, with UNHCR as the lead. The committee is reviewing a local response plan to address risks posed by the increased number of confirmed cases in Bangassou, a town in CAR that sits in front of Ndu (Bas Uele Province), where over 21,000 new refugees have been registered, due to continuous pendular movements between the two localities.
- UNHCR and partners distributed 2,570 face masks to refugees and host community members during the relocation of CAR refugees from Yakoma to Modale and during other activities such as the distributions of emergency cash and CRIs in Limasa, Gomba and Yakoma, North Ubangi Province, as well as during awareness raising sessions in hosting locations for new refugees in Bas Uele Province.

## POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS

- UNHCR continues to closely monitor the evolution of the situation in the Central African Republic to assess the security conditions and the feasibility of resuming voluntary repatriation operations in the future. At the current time, there is a need for further protection analysis, but voluntary repatriation (VOLREP) could be resumed in the near future in the prefectures of Lobaye and Ombella-M'Poko (CAR). Spontaneous returns to the border areas in the Mbomou territory have been also reported, although the situation remains unstable due to the presence of armed groups.

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## External / Donor Relations

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