

AD HOC UPDATE #13: Situation concerning the post-election influx of refugees from the Central African Republic to the Democratic Republic of Congo

28 July 2021

Highlights

- By end of June 2021, UNHCR and the National Commission for Refugees (CNR) have finalised the biometric registration of new Central African refugees arrived in the DRC. **73,645 individuals were registered in North Ubangi, South Ubangi and Bas Uele Provinces.**
- As of 26 July, UNHCR and partners have **relocated 3,705 CAR refugees from Yakoma to the Modale site**, North Ubangi Province.
- In July, UNHCR **distributed core relief items to 13,870 CAR refugees in Dula, Pandu and surroundings areas**, Bosobolo Territory, North Ubangi Province.
- From 15 – 19 July, **UNHCR and WFP carried out joint distributions of cash-for-food and soap to 6,768 CAR refugees in Limasa and Gomba**, North Ubangi Province.



UNHCR and partner ADSSE assist a Central African refugee woman to board a vehicle during a relocation from Yakoma to a safer site in Modale, North Ubangi province © UNHCR/ Pierre Polepole

L2 Emergency Declaration

On 21 January, a Level 2 emergency was declared for the UNHCR Operation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to scale up UNHCR operations' preparedness and response activities in addressing the protection needs of newly arrived CAR refugees and other populations affected by the crisis.

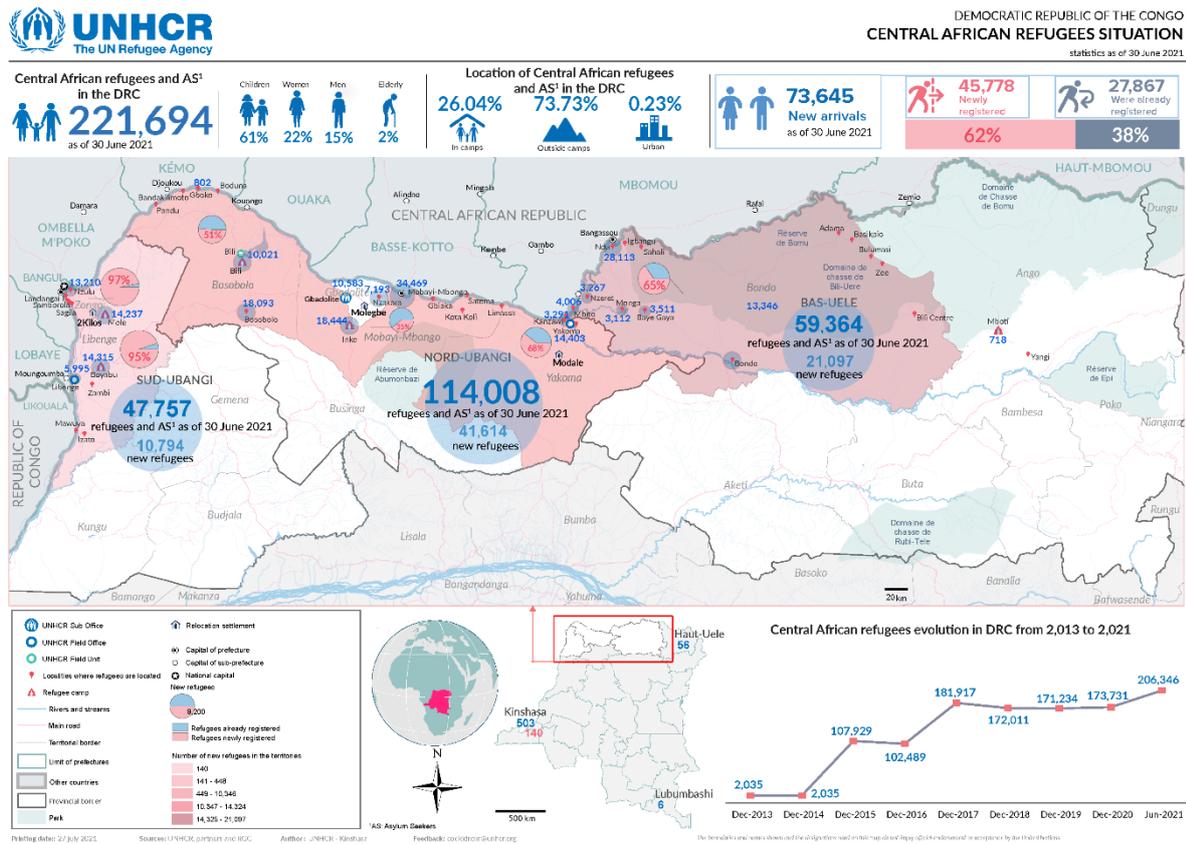
EMERGENCY OVERVIEW

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, coastline areas close to Bosobolo territory (Nord Ubangi Province) are reportedly still controlled by rebel groups, with sporadic incursions in DRC territory and frequent security incidents.

Between December 2020 and July 2021, thousands of 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 rights abuses and looting in their home villages in CAR. The majority of them are women and children. There are many persons with special needs, such as elderly persons at risk, people 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



I- STATISTICS & KEY FIGURES

As of 30 June, UNHCR and CNR biometrically registered **73,645 new arrivals (20,136 households)** from the Central African refugees. The newly arrived refugees are distributed across the three provinces as follows:

- **41,614 individuals (10,840 households)** in over 18 locations in **North Ubangi Province**
- **21,097 individuals (6,186 households)** in 11 locations in **Bas Uele Province**
- **10,794 individuals (3,032 households)** in 11 locations in **South Ubangi Province**
- **140 individuals (78 households)** in Kinshasa.

Statistics indicate that 27,867 individuals (7,701 households) representing the 38% of the new arrivals are people who had previously been registered by UNHCR as refugees and must have returned spontaneously to their country of origin prior to the December 2020 election crisis.

The biometric registration of new arrivals has officially ended in June 2021, but UNHCR has set up a mechanism for continuous registration of small groups of arrivals including people who might be fleeing from ongoing disarmament operations by the CAR government or ethnic conflicts in certain localities.

KEY FIGURES

73,645

CAR refugees biometrically registered in the DRC since January 2021

3,705

Newly arrived CAR refugees relocated from Yakoma to the Modale site, North Ubangi province

1,743

Unaccompanied refugee children identified



UNHCR's partner AIRD is constructing durable classrooms to replace emergency infrastructures in Modale site, North Ubangi province. © UNHCR/ Alessio Baldaccini

II- 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.

- The need for adequate shelters remains high. Over 13,000 CAR refugee households continue to live in precarious conditions such as makeshift shelters set up along riverbanks and exposed to torrential rains or within local communities already strained by limited resources. They are dependent on emergency aid that is barely trickling in due to funding difficulties. As a result, there are great protection risks, especially for women and girls who may resort to negative coping mechanisms.
- UNHCR and partners have documented a total of 162 cases of SGBV including 90 amongst new arrivals in North Ubangi, South Ubangi and Bas Uele Provinces since the influx. Most of the incidents reportedly occurred in CAR. The operational context characterized by extreme poverty and a complete absence of care facilities hinders UNHCR capacity to provide a multisectoral response to SGBV, due to limited legal access to justice and insufficient socio-economic assistance to survivors.
-

- Major gaps remain in providing emergency cash assistance across all the new caseloads and along with smaller number of extremely vulnerable host community populations in South Ubangi, Bosobolo and Mobayi Mbongo Territories, North Ubangi. The absence of emergency cash assistance has exacerbated incidents of SGBV and other protection cases.
- There is an urgent need for hygiene kits to support women and girls of childbearing age to practice good menstrual hygiene and to reduce exposure to SGBV.
- Protection concerns identified during various assessments include unaccompanied and separated children, children at risk, child laborers, out-of-school children and children with disabilities. Some of the children have been exposed to violence during the forced displacement from CAR, which has affected their wellbeing. All these children require targeted support, which will be partly delivered through expansion of access to education. Additional funding is needed for the construction and rehabilitation of classrooms of schools in northern DRC
- Insufficient funding and logistic challenges have slowed down the relocation of CAR refugees to the opportunity sites. Albeit relocalisation is still ongoing, only 3,705 people have been relocated so far to the Modale site, which has the capacity to host 10,000 individuals. UNHCR has been obliged to hire trucks on rental basis to facilitate transportation of individuals and their property to Modale.
- Funding constraints severely affect the capacity of UNHCR and partners to implement livelihood activities which are at the heart of the “alternative to camp” approach, which makes refugees vulnerable to several protection issues.
- 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 also an increasing number of cases of severe and acute malnutrition amongst children in several locations hosting CAR refugees in the three provinces, notably in Nzakara and Lembo in North Ubangi. Most of the families offer seasonal farm labour in exchange for small amounts of money or food that can hardly meet the daily needs of their families. The few existing health facilities either have no nutrition programmes or have run out of nutrition supplements.
- Access to health services remain challenging. In the Modale site, the lack of ambulances renders difficult to transport refugees with serious health conditions to the reference hospital, 25km away, making them dependent on bicycles or motorbikes which poses further risks given the extremely degraded roads in the area.
- Risks of Covid-19 infections remain high in Ndu (Bas Uele Province) due to its proximity to Bangassou (CAR) where cases have increased in the last few weeks. 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 medical equipment.
- There is an urgent need for the rehabilitation and construction of boreholes and 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.
- In the location hosting refugees, 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 because of the extremely degraded or non-existing roads, exacerbated 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. 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.



Poor road conditions make delivering humanitarian assistance a huge challenge between Gbadolite and Yakoma. © UNHCR/Pierre Polepole

III- MULTISECTORAL RESPONSE



PROTECTION

- In June, UNHCR and partners completed biometric registration of the CAR refugees arrived since December 2020 in the three northern provinces of DRC. A total of 73,645 individuals (20,136 households) have been registered in the three provinces of North Ubangi, South Ubangi and Bas Uele. UNHCR and CNR also put in place mechanisms for continuous registrations of small groups of persons from CAR still crossing into DRC.
- To enhance access to socio-economic services and ensure free movement, UNHCR and CNR have distributed a total of 1,747 refugee identity cards to beneficiaries in Modale, and Yakoma, North Ubangi Province, and in South Ubangi. More ID cards will progressively be distributed to other CAR refugees residing in northern DRC.
- UNHCR and partners continue to offer multiple assistance to some 1,743 unaccompanied CAR refugee children identified during biometric registration, protection monitoring, multisectoral evaluation missions and home visits. This assistance includes best interest procedures, placement in host families, medical and psychosocial support and sporting activities.
- UNHCR, through CNR and other partners, is following procedures for the acquisition of birth certificates for over 400 identified CAR refugee children born in DRC in the past few months. This will facilitate planning for protection and multi-sectoral assistance to them, as well as prevent statelessness.
- UNHCR and partners are continuing relocations of CAR refugees from Yakoma to the Modale site, North Ubangi Province. As of 27 July, a total of 3,705 individuals (966 households) have been relocated to the site, representing about 57% of those who signed up for relocation. UNHCR and partners have planted 150 fruit trees within the context of a reforestation campaign at the Modale site.
- Meanwhile, two more sites have been approved by DRC authorities for the relocation of CAR refugees, within UNHCR's "alternatives to camp" approach. They include, Molegbe (North Ubangi province) and 2-kilos (South Ubangi province), with a capacity to host 10,000 persons each. Site planning work has begun on both sites.
- Ongoing intention surveys in various locations reveal that over 80% of refugees residing outside of camps are willing to relocate to the new sites. In South Ubangi province, 10,326 individuals (2,732 households), representing almost the entire new caseload have stated their willingness to be relocated to 2-kilos in Zongo.



EDUCATION

- To enhance the protection of children, ADSSE facilitated the enrolment of 614 children of school going age identified at the Wele primary school and at a secondary school at the Modale site. ADSSE also provided close to 200 benches and over 100 school kits.
- To improve the learning environment for pupils, AIRD launched construction work for three durable classrooms to progressively replace the emergency infrastructure initially set up at the primary school in Modale. A total of six classrooms will be built to accommodate both refugee and host community pupils.



CASH-BASED INTERVENTIONS (CBI)

- Between 15 and 19 July, UNHCR and the World Food Programme (WFP) carried out joint distributions of cash-for-food assistance and soap to a total of 6,768 individuals (1,882 households) in Limasa and Gomba, North Ubangi Province.
- UNHCR partner ACTED distributed cash-for-food rations to 11,895 new CAR refugees in Zongo centre, Sagila, Congo Rive and Sambolola, South Ubangi Province.



SHELTER/INFRASTRUCTURE AND CORE RELIEF ITEMS (CRIs)

- UNHCR's partners have continued the rehabilitation and construction of various infrastructures as refugees progressively move to Modale site, North Ubangi province.
- About 1,000 shelters have already been built at the Modale site, while others 1700 are under construction.
- In the first week of July, UNHCR distributed core relief items to 3,418 refugee and 124 host community households in the localities of Dula, Pandu and environs, Bosobolo Territory, North Ubangi Province.

- In June, World Vision distributed CRIs to an estimated 2,500 refugees and host community members in Sambolola, Congo Rive (South Ubangi), and in Nzakara (North Ubangi Province).
- UNHCR and partners AIRD are carrying out rehabilitation work on the Bigenzale, Abongo and Luwe bridges of linking Yakoma to Modale. This will facilitate access by humanitarian actors, to refugees as well as ease transportation for refugees and their property during the current relocations.



WATER AND SANITATION

- In Modale site, the transit health centre and 176 latrines have been completed as of 27 July and are now fully functional.
- UNHCR's partner ACTED completed the construction of a fifth water point at the Modale site to improve portable water supply to newly relocated CAR refugees.



HEALTH

- Between 6 and 10 July, UNHCR supported a mass measles inoculation drive for 26,540 children between six and 59 months in the Yakoma and Wasolo health zones, North Ubangi Province. Amongst the beneficiaries were 3,557 CAR refugee children including new arrivals. The vaccination campaign was jointly organized by the DRC's ministry of health, in partnership with UNHCR, UNICEF and World Vision.

POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS

UNHCR is closely monitoring the situation in the Central African Republic, to assess the security conditions and the feasibility of resuming voluntary repatriation operations of an estimated 6,000 persons from South Ubangi and from Inke camp (North Ubangi) in 2021, albeit the situation warrants further protection analysis. In the meantime, 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.

External / Donor Relations

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is grateful for the support of:

Donors for UNHCR operations in DRC in 2021

USA (12,8M) | Sweden (4,8M) | Education Cannot Wait (2M) | Japan (1,7M) | Canada (1,6M) | UN Peacebuilding Fund (1,6M) | EU (1,5M) | CERF (1,5M) | France (1,2M) | Norway (0,6M) | UN Covid-19 MPTF (0,2M) | ONUSIDA (0,2M) | Toyota Tsuho Corporation (0,2M) | UPS Corporate (0,1M) | Unilever UK (0,1M) | Denmark (0,02M) |

Donors of regional or sub-regional funds in 2021

USA (33M) | Germany (10,9M) | Private Donors Germany (6M) | Canada (5,6M) | Private Donors Australia (4,9M) | Finland (2,4M) |

Major donors of unearmarked funds in 2021

Norway (80M) | Sweden (66,9M) | Private Donors Spain (42,6M) | Netherlands (36,1M) | Denmark (34,6M) | Germany (26M) | Private Donors Korea (21,5M) | France (20M) | Switzerland (16,4M) | Private Donors Japan (14,3M) | Ireland (12,5 M) | Belgium (11,9M) | Italy (10,7M) | Private Donors Italy (10,4M) |

Contact

Johannes van Gemund, Senior External Relations Officer, UNHCR Representation Kinshasa, gemund@unhcr.org, Tel: +243 817 009 484

Vittoria Moretti, Associate External Relations and Reporting Officer, UNHCR Representation Kinshasa, moretti@unhcr.org, Tel: +243 820 556 659

[DR Congo Emergency page](#) | [UNHCR DRC operation page](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#)