

CAR SITUATION

UNHCR CAR UPDATE

APRIL 2017 HIGHLIGHTS

KEY FIGURES

440,000 IDPs in CAR of whom **108,333** in sites and **291,667** in host families

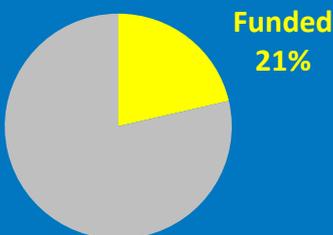
18,425 Central African refugees have spontaneously returned to the country since the start of the year

2,740 IDP households returned from IDP sites in Bangui during April

FUNDING

USD 53.3 million

Requested for the situation



PRIORITIES

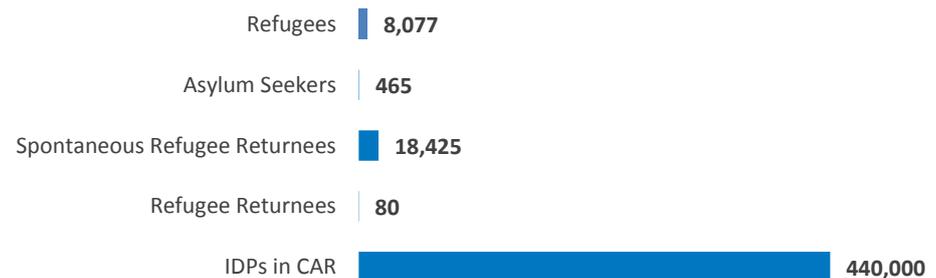
- Ensure the delivery of protection monitoring and response to IDPs in the central zone of the country
- Complete the return of IDPs from the last remaining sites in Bangui
- Register and assist new refugee returnees numbers across the country



An IDP collects her NFI assistance at the distribution site in Bria.
Hervé Gauthier Ndanous/UNHCR/7 May 2017

- Cross-border meetings were held with UNHCR colleagues from the Democratic Republic of Congo to discuss the facilitation of voluntary repatriation amidst an increase in spontaneous returns to CAR.
- The number of IDPs in CAR has increased following armed group attacks on a number of villages along the Bambari-Ippy road in Ouaka prefecture
- UNHCR continued its efforts to harmonise classification tools for incidents of SGBV. A number of missions and trainings were organised to establish a common best practice.

A total of **467,047** people of concern.



RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Security

General: A number of public order disturbances targeting MINUSCA were recorded in Bangui and Kaga-Bandoro, though without major impact.

In general, crime and clashes involving Ex-Seleka groups remained the main threats across the country. The Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) process was advanced through the recruitment of 500 policemen and gendarmes. The upcoming inclusion of former combatants into the fire brigade is also seen as a positive step towards peace.

Central Sector: On Wednesday, 5 April, a fire broke out at the Lazare IDP site in Kaga-Bandoro. Some 6,234 individuals were affected, including 23 who sustained injuries.

The centre of the country saw yet more clashes between the UPC and the FPRC / MPC / AB coalition, with heavy fighting reported on 7 and 8 April in the vicinity of Boyo on the Ippy-Bambari axis. Intercommunal violence between Arabs and Fulanis was also reported.

Anti-Balaka leaders were arrested by MINUSCA in Bambari on 8 April after they had disrupted the distribution of assistance to IDPs.

On 11 April, a MINUSCA Human Rights team was assaulted by youths in Bornou district, Bambari.

On 16 April 2017, a number of NGOs in Kabo reported unidentified armed men approaching their offices. Although they did not attempt to gain entry, these incidents were emblematic of the increasing pressure that humanitarian actors are facing. The climate of fear was heightened the following day, when an International NGO in Batangafo was subjected to an armed robbery. A warehouse belonging to a national NGO at the Catholic Mission IDP site in Batangafo was also ransacked by Anti-Balaka on 19 April.

Fresh internal displacement was reported in Kaga-Bandoro after armed groups looted and burnt down ten houses in the district of Botto. Approximately 1,000 fled, some of whom were reported as fleeing into the bush.

Western Sector: In the west, the security situation was dominated by attacks and exactions against the civilian population by the RJ / MPC coalition and the 3R. The occupation of Ngaoundaye and Bang on 4 April resulted in forced displacement and some fleeing across the border into Cameroon and Chad. The situation later returned to normal with the arrival of the MINUSCA force which quickly forced the militants out of Ngaoundaye.

Eastern Sector: Eastern parts of the country faced an upsurge in attacks as well as exactions against the civilian population by individuals associated with the UPC. This situation affected the towns of Nzako, Bakouma, and Bangassou, all of which lie on the same axis in Mbomou prefecture, and Zemio in Haute-Mbomou.

During the night of 14 April, an attack was launched against the MINUSCA base in Zemio. This attempted attack caused a brief suspension of humanitarian activities in the town before their resumption two days later.

The MINUSCA base in Bria was robbed during the night of 17 April. The perpetrators were unidentified.

Alleged LRA elements attacked the village of Bangassou Nzakara, 25 km north of Zemio, on 23 April.

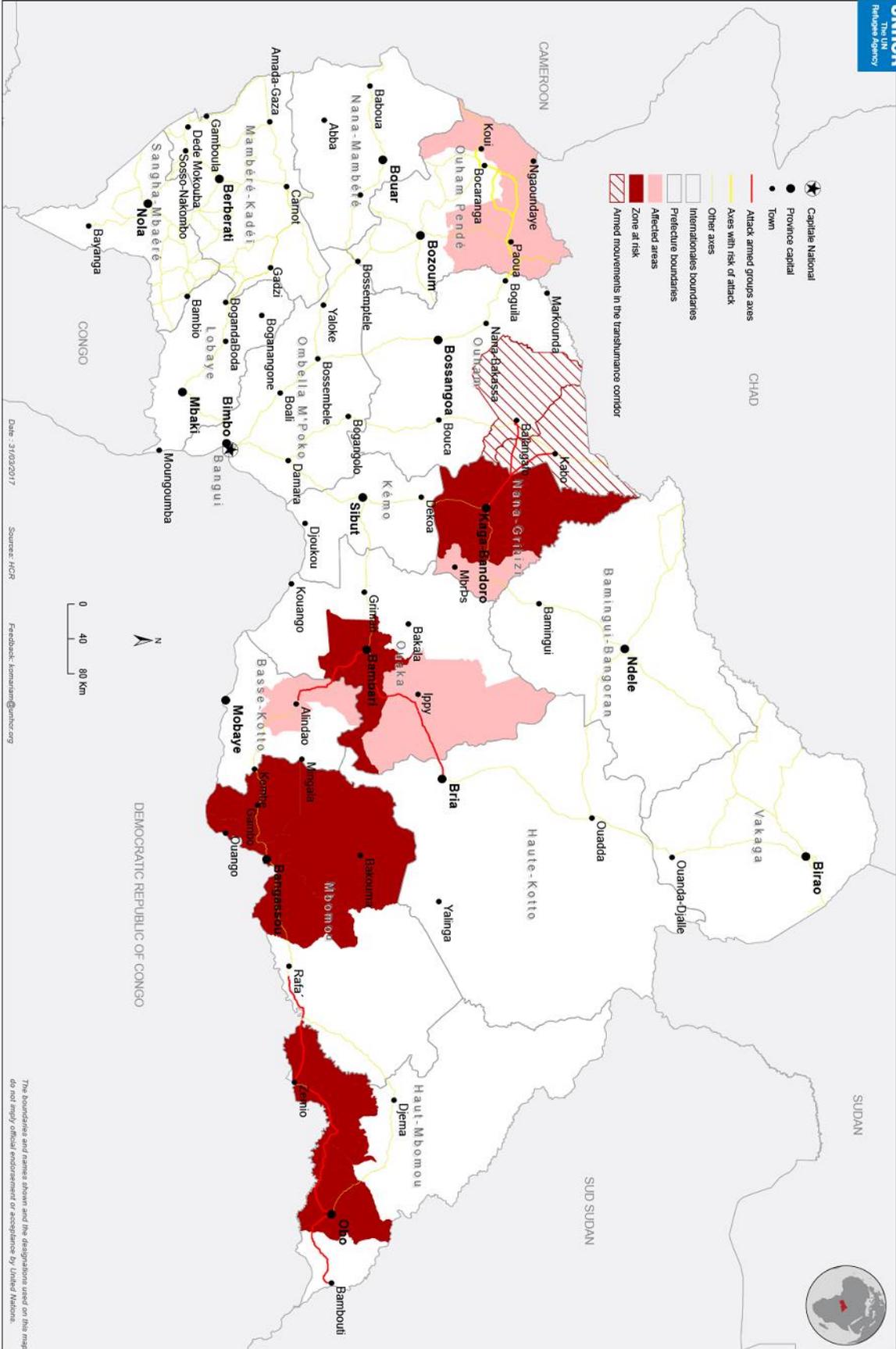
On the night of 23 to 24 April, Ugandan troops stationed in Zemio and Kadjema began their withdrawal from the area. Ugandan forces will also withdraw from Obo during the month of May as their eight-year operation to track down the LRA draws to a close.

On 30 April, a convoy containing five UNHCR trucks that were being driven by partner AIRD was attacked on the road between Zemio and Rafai. No damage was recorded thanks to the quick reaction of the escort. Armed escort remains the only way to secure convoys travelling on the Obo-Zemio-Rafai axis.



HOTSPOTS IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

As of April 2017



Operations

UNHCR held a cross-border meeting in late April with colleagues from its sister operation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The discussion centred on the increasing numbers of Central African refugees repatriating from the DRC, how best to support their return, and whether a facilitated voluntary repatriation process could be contemplated in the future. The group also looked at the forms of support available to Congolese refugees voluntarily repatriating from CAR to DRC.

Durable shelter solutions were provided for 129 beneficiaries in Yaloke. Rehabilitation and construction activities were undertaken by national NGO YAMACUIR with funding and guidance from UNHCR.

The selection process also got underway three national NGOs to partner with UNHCR for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of 600 shelters in Bangui for returning IDPs and refugee returnees. The partnerships should be finalised in the coming month.

Protection

Sexual and gender based violence

Two field missions were organised by Community Services staff during the month of April. The first of these missions visited Kaga Bandoro and consisted of training partner organisations' focal points in the usage of tools to classify incidents of SGBV. Focus groups were organised with IDP and refugee returnees to assess their living conditions since their return as well as with the inhabitants of the Sangaris IDP site to assess their needs.

The second mission was to Bambari where training sessions were held with partner COOPI. Tools for classifying SGBV incidents were shared with participants and data collection tools were harmonised.

A training workshop was held for SGBV focal points in Bangui to share referencing tools for SGBV incidents. Each partner had the opportunity to present the activities that they have been carrying out in Bangui and in the field.

The Working Group on Combating Child Marriage, convened by the Ministry of Social Affairs and National Reconciliation, held a meeting in which UNHCR proposed an operational communication plan to partners and shared key messages that can be reused during the awareness and communication campaigns.

Education

On 25 April 2017, an assembly was held with the parents of all school-age refugee children in Zemio. Approximately, 700 parents attended. During the meeting, parents were requested to ensure the attendance of their children at school. They were reminded that schooling remains free, as do supplies, and that UNHCR and its education partner JUPEDDEC ensure that teachers are adequately trained. A particular effort was made to encourage the increased attendance of girls.

Subsequent to this meeting, a capacity-building training for 31 teachers at the Congolese refugee school complex in Zemio was delivered on 27 and 28 April.

Internally Displaced Persons

An increasing focus was placed on the centre of the country during April. Armed groups continued to cause significant displacement in Basse-Kotto and Mbomou prefectures, whilst Bria in Haute-Kotto was afflicted by the same tensions that have persisted since late 2016. A UNHCR team from Field Office Bambari conducted a mission to Bria from 16 to 22 April in order to assess needs and to provide support to COOPI, UNHCR's partner on the ground.

During the mission, it was found that many had moved to the PK3 after houses had been burned down in numerous parts of the town. A total of 267 houses had been set on fire, directly impacting an estimated 1,180 people.

As a consequence of the particular protection risks that their community faces, Fulanis in Bria and its surroundings gathered in the Gobolo area of the city, where they could be more easily protected by MINUSCA. A total of 110 such households were registered.

A further group consisting of approximately 30 households were found to have gathered next to Katekondji school in makeshift shelters due to lack of space at the PK3 site. According to data provided by OXFAM, which maintains a presence in Bria, a total of 14,027 displaced individuals (2,633 households) were registered in Bria, a figure which includes both those living in sites and those staying with host families. This figure only includes those who have come forward for registration, meaning that the real figure may yet be considerably higher. The UNHCR team shared a data collection tool with COOPI in order to facilitate more accurate recording and updating of displacement figures.

Displacement in the north-west of the country is ongoing. Notably, there has still been no solution found for the Fulani population currently displaced in Ndim at the site of the Catholic Church of Bocaranga whose presence had led to mounting pressure from the community and threats from Anti-Balaka groups. At the same time, ongoing displacement in and around Markounda also remains a concern. Dwindling food stocks amongst the displaced families in this area have heightened their vulnerability.

Refugees

During the month of April, close protection monitoring was conducted in Obo for 18 South Sudanese refugee households in which GBV cases had been recorded. Food shortages as agricultural work got underway at the beginning of the month led to a lower number of children attending classes. Family mediation activities were increasingly sought after by women, an increasing number of whom reported being subjected to physical and mental aggression by their spouses, especially at times when assistance was being distributed.

Approximately 300 new arrivals from South Sudan were reported in Bambouti on 7 April. At the same time, refugee movements were seen between the Obo camp and the Bambouti border with South Sudan. Refugees made use of a convoy of Ugandan forces to travel to Bambouti.

The main reasons given for this movement were as follows:

- Some refugees reported that they wanted to bring the rest of their family back to Bambouti;
- Some wished to visit relatives who had chosen to remain in Bambouti;
- Some sought to transfer belongings that they had left behind during the relocation operation in late 2016;
- Others were returning to Bambouti due to the fertility of the soil there, or to conduct trade;

Following a UNHCR protection mission Bangui to Obo from 10 to 14 April 2017, the Camp Refugee Committee, the National Refugee Commission (CNR) and Associate Field Protection identified and pre-registered 109 new refugees from 35 households living in host families in Obo.

Returnees

As of 30 April, some 18,425 spontaneous refugee returns to CAR have been recorded. Despite ongoing insecurity in the prefecture, estimates show that some 10,000 individuals have returned to Ouaka since the beginning of 2017, while Basse-Kotto – which borders the Democratic Republic of Congo – has received 4,500 refugee returnees. Western prefectures of the country, meanwhile, have recorded 1,328 spontaneous refugee returnees since the beginning of the year.

This represents a steady increase in the number of registered returns, suggestive of a growing return trend by refugees living in Cameroon and Chad.

Durable Solutions and Reintegration

In April 2017, PARET with the support of UNHCR, closed five more IDP sites in Bangui, including Saint-Jacques Kpetene, Ben-Zvi, Saint Joseph Mukassa, the Orphanage of the Eglise Byzantine, and The Eglise des Frères Castors. As part of the return process, cash assistance was provided to 2,740 households (7,275 people). The mass information campaign

surrounding returns continued, with 15 community meetings held at the remaining IDP sites in Bangui to explain the procedure for assisting those who wish to leave the sites voluntarily. PARET also identified associations that could develop income-generating activities in return neighbourhoods. This included a women's association from the commune of Begoua which has proposed a project to manufacture and sell soap.



Shelter/Non Food Items/Camp Coordination and Camp Management

Despite the volatility of the security situation in Bambari, UNHCR managed to deliver assistance to Sudanese refugees as well as to IDPs. As a result, 521 refugee households in Pladama Ouaka camp received NFI kits and 559 NFI kits were distributed to IDPs in Aviation, Cotonnier and PK8 sites. The team in Bambari was unable to provide NFIs to the IDPs living at the Elevage site due to security constraints. NFI kits were distributed to newly-displaced populations from Bakala, Ndassima and Ippy. The distribution reached 3,759 individuals (1,113 households).

A return intention survey was launched for IDPs living in sites in Bambari and Kaga-Bandoro. This exercise will enable UNHCR to plan its future NFI and shelter interventions, as well as preparing a return assistance programme. A total of 3,844 IDPs (1,017 households) were assisted with emergency shelter in IDP sites in Kaga-bandoro.

Working in partnership

- 4 Ministries: (i) Interior, Public Security, Territorial Administration, line Ministry (ii) Social affairs and National Reconciliation, (iii) Minister of Economy, Plan and Cooperation (iv) Urban development and Housing
- 2 governmental partners: the National Refugee Commission (CNR) and Projet d'Appui au Retour et à la Réintégration en République Centrafricaine (PARET), as well as 8 partners selected in 2017 to implement UNHCR activities in CAR: Afrique, Secours et Assistance; AIRD; Norwegian Refugee Council; Danish Refugee Council; Mercy Corps; Cooperazione Internazionale; INTERSOS; Vision to Change the World
- 6 national NGOs: Bangui Sans Frontières (BSF); Idéal; Yamacuir; JUPEDEC; Arbre de vie; ATEDEC;
- Three clusters led by UNHCR in CAR: Protection, Camp Coordination Camp Management (CCCM), and Non Food Items/Shelter which have been merged with CCCM.
- Partnership with UNDP and the government in the search for durable solutions for IDPs and returnees in CAR with the involvement of humanitarian partners and early recovery/development actors as well as MINUSCA.

UNHCR and Partners' presence in CAR

Sectors of Intervention:

- **Protection** of conflict-affected people including displaced
- **Emergency response** to population movements (shelter and core relief items)
- **Support to return** through support to house reconstruction and promotion of housing, land and property rights
- **Multi-sectorial assistance to refugees** (registration, documentation, camp management, health, education, vocational training, income generating activities etc.)
- **Coordination of humanitarian response** in protection, camp coordination camp management, shelter and core relief items

UNHCR is grateful for the generous contributions of donors who have given lifesaving contributions to UNHCR this year as well as the following donors who have directly contributed to the operation: **France | Germany | Japan | The United States of America | Private donors in Sweden**

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