

AD HOC UPDATE #10: Situation concerning the influx from the Central African Republic to the DRC

9 April 2021

Highlights

- As of 20 March, 51,890 newly arrived refugees (14,692 households) from the Central African Republic have been registered by UNHCR and the National Commission for Refugees (CNR) in North and South Ubangi Provinces and in Bas Huele.
- On 30 March, 16 partners organizations launched a Refugee Response Plan (RRP) led by UNHCR and by the Government of the DRC and appealing for US\$ 69 million to address the urgent needs of thousands of CAR refugees in the and host communities in the Northern DRC.
- On 23-25 March, a delegation from the European Union and its Member States met with Central African refugees in North Ubangi and visited Modale village, where refugees will be relocated in the coming weeks.
- Between 24-28 March, almost 7000 Central African refugees and host communities members benefited from an emergency cash assistance distribution in North Ubangi.



Community shelters are being built by UNHCR partner AIRD in the transit center in Modale site, North Ubangi province © AIRD/Yakoma

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- SITUATION

• Elections

On 30 March 2021, Faustin-Archange Touadera was sworn in for a second five-years term as President of the Central African Republic (CAR). Touadera's appointment has been contested by his main opponents and the security situation in the country remains tense and characterized by sporadic violence which started with the Presidential elections last December 2020. On 14 March, a second round of elections took place across the country without major disruptions and saw 70 members of Parliament elected. Several armed groups, most of them signatories of the February 2019 peace agreement called off a ceasefire and merged into the Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC), resuming military operations against the government.

• Security situation

The state of emergency which was declared by authorities on 21 January, has been prolonged until August 2021 and a night curfew between 6pm and 5am has been resumed after the elections. As the CAR armed forces continue to carry out counter-insurgency operations together with their allies, the security situation remains tense within the country but has not deteriorated further in the past month. Until recently, many families have fled their homes, with many seeking refuge in neighbouring countries, most notably in DRC, in spontaneous sites situated along the border of the Ubangi river.

The newly displaced population reported human rights violations against civilians and looting by armed groups in various villages in CAR. Most of the recently arrived refugees have remained very close to the borders, thus being

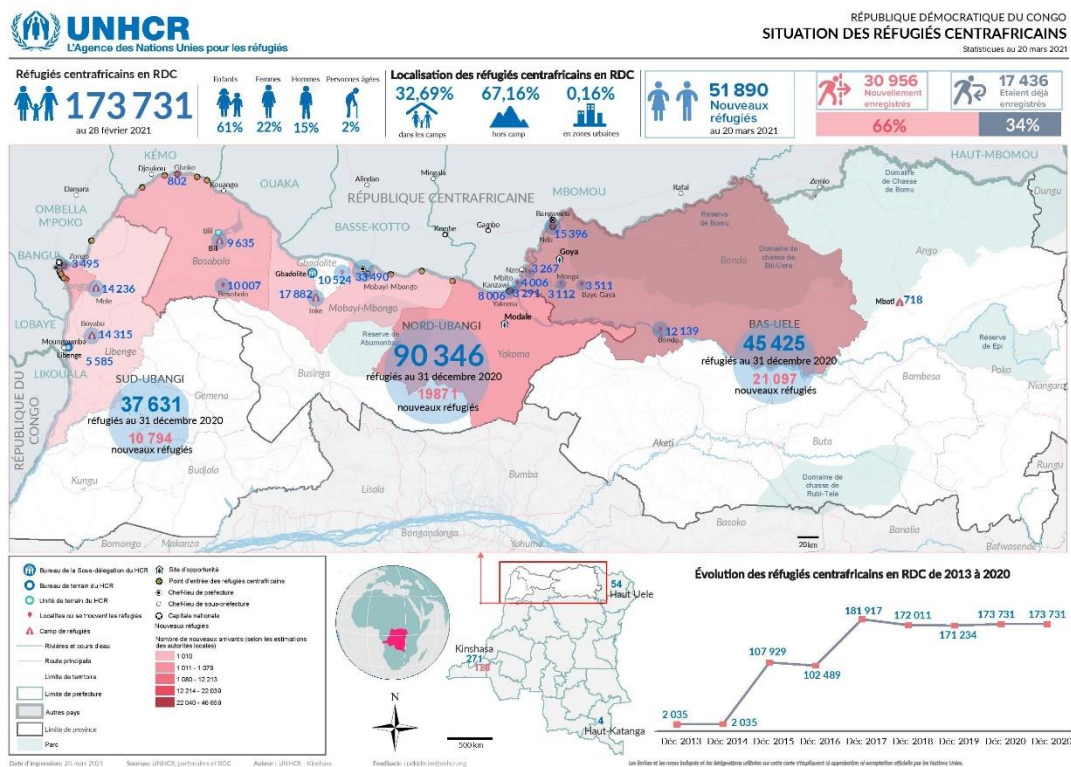
exposed to the risks of further attacks and rights violations by armed groups. UNHCR is working with the Congolese authorities to relocate them to villages meeting the minimum standards of security. The majority of them are women and children, while there are also many persons with special needs, such as elderly persons at risk, persons with disabilities and survivors of SGBV.

Over the past months, UNHCR and the National Commission for Refugees (CNR) have set up joint monitoring teams at the border in the three provinces affected by the influx to continue monitoring the situation.

- **Consequences on the voluntary repatriation operation**

Insecurity in CAR has severely affected the voluntary repatriation operation, relaunched in November 2020 after the COVID-19 pandemic had forced border closures. More than 17,000 refugees currently living at Mole and Boyabu camps in South Ubangi Province had expressed their intention to return home. However, several areas previously deemed safe to receive returnees are now again in the grip of insecurity. It should be noted that some of the recent arrivals from the outskirts of Bangui are possibly refugees who had returned during the voluntary repatriations from Mole and Boyabu camps in South Ubangi province, between 2019 and 2020. UNHCR is monitoring closely 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.

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



II- STATISTICS

According to local authorities, **92,053 individuals from the Central African Republic** have arrived in the DRC. (this estimated figure is yet to be verified) since December 2020. This includes an estimated 46,659 individuals in Bas Uele Province, 35,331 in North Ubangi Province and 10,063 in South Ubangi province. Most of the new arrivals have stayed close to the borders in some 40 villages along the banks of the border rivers that separate CAR from DRC.

Biometric registration of refugees is ongoing in several locations along the border. As of 20 March 2021, 51,890 refugees (14,692 households) have been biometrically registered by UNHCR and CNR in the Bas Huele, North Ubangi and South Ubangi provinces.

III- NEEDS

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.

- Difficult access to healthcare. Most health centres in the three provinces affected by the influx of refugees are already lacking adequate medical supplies and equipment, as well as trained medical professionals and facilities.
- Access to drinking is another urgent need: several households have been drinking and using river water in the absence of running water and boreholes. With greater funding, new boreholes could be built and water sources rehabilitated.
- Essential drugs are out of stock in most of the health zones hosting refugees in the North Ubangi, South Ubangi and Bas Uele Provinces.
- Farming and fishing tools and seeds remain urgently needed.
- There are insufficient quantities core relief items (CRIs) to cover the needs of all the newly arrived households.
- There have been several unattended births among the new arrived population and there is an urgent need for hygiene kits for young women and girls of reproductive age.
- There is a continued need to strengthen COVID-19 awareness and prevention measures both in the host sites and in the relocation sites, given the increased risks of infection, as a result of mass movement and crowded settlement sites.
- There is the need to relocate the newly arrived refugees towards the “settlements of hope” (relocation sites) granted by the local authorities in order to move them further away from the border where they are susceptible to the risks of attacks by armed groups from CAR or possible forced recruitment.
- The extremely bad road conditions render the access to several host sites very difficult, thus delaying the provision of relief goods and humanitarian assistance.
- Psychosocial support is needed for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). 91 cases of SGBV have been identified and reported in the three provinces affected by the mass influx.
- There is need to ensure that refugees have access to emergency sanitation infrastructures (communal latrines and bathing spaces). Plastic sheets are needed for the construction of emergency WASH infrastructures.
- Emergency education services are needed to reinforce protection for children who make up a significant portion of the displaced population.
- UNHCR is raising resources to airlift more emergency equipment from Kinshasa to Yakoma to assist people in need as quickly as possible. Further resources for trucking this equipment to the border areas as well as for warehousing stocks are also needed.

IV- ACTIONS

- In Modale, one of the identified relocation sites approximately 35km from Yakoma, North Ubangi Province, UNCHR and partners are continuing construction works in view of the relocation of refugees from Yakoma, which is planned to begin in the coming weeks. At this point, 48 hectares have been cleared (respecting the indications from local authorities on environmental preservation) and four community shelters have now been completed, out of the five expected to be built for the transit center of the site. 48 land plots have been delimited and 32 emergency family shelters have been installed, among which 28 are currently being completed.
- The first borehole out of the 3 expected and sanitary infrastructures are being currently built by ACTED in Modale site, together with eight blocks of latrines in the transit centre.
- UNHCR partner AIRD has completed the rehabilitation works of the Bigenzale bridge situated approximately 65 km from Yakoma and is currently repairing the potholes and completing the rehabilitation of three other bridges on the road towards Modale.
- UNHCR has concluded an agreement with the local health centre in Wasolo for the construction of an emergency healthcare centre made with tarpaulins to provide essential health care to refugees in the first phase of their arrival, which will be followed by the construction of a reference health centre in the Modale site.
- UNHCR partner ADSSE has identified 9,800 school-age children among new arrivals of CAR refugees in three provinces affected by the influx, who will be reinserted into schools once relocated to Modale.
- Between 24 and 27 March, an emergency cash distribution has been carried out by UNHCR in Yakoma through the partner Trust Merchant Bank (TMB). 6,947 individuals (2,133 most vulnerable households) of which 232 local community members (40 households) have benefited of this assistance in Yakoma, North Ubangi Province.

- As of April 2, 91 SGBV cases have been identified and reported in the provinces of South and North Ubangi and in Bas Huelé by UNHCR partner AIDES. These SGBV episodes include rape and child marriages. AIDES is providing psychosocial support and is conducting awareness raising campaigns on SGBV prevention.
- 6,143 persons with specific needs have been identified as of 2 April by UNHCR. The majority group is composed of unaccompanied children (1,566), followed by vulnerable women (1,183). UNHCR is currently planning to undertake specific monitoring and assistance actions based on community-based approaches and existing assistance mechanism.
- Thanks to the advocacy conducted by UNHCR, the North Ubangi Provincial Health Division has granted access to free healthcare to CAR refugee children and host community children under five, as well as to pregnant and breastfeeding women in seven health centres situated within the three health zones supported by UNHCR in the Mobaye, Yakoma and Gbadolite in the North Ubangi province.
- Between 25 and 27 March, over 14,000 refugee children have been vaccinated against polio in the North and South Ubangi provinces as part of the first phase of a vaccination campaign organised by the Ministry of Health. This campaign is the result of an advocacy effort carried out by UNHCR towards WHO, UNICEF and the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI). The second phase is expected for 8-10 April.
- From 23 to 25 March, [a visit of European Union Ambassadors](#) to Yakoma and the surrounding area (North Ubangi Province) was organized by UNHCR. The aim of this visit was to provide EU Ambassadors with the opportunity to assess the living conditions of recently arrived CAR refugees and of the communities hosting them, to better understand the level of assistance already provided to them and their needs, as well as the difficulties and constraints in the delivery of humanitarian assistance in this part of the country.
- On 30 March, 16 humanitarian partners officially launched an [Inter-Agency Refugee Response Plan](#), coordinated by UNHCR and by the Government of the DRC, which appeals for US\$ 69 million to meet the complex needs of the 92,000 recently arrived refugees from CAR in the DRC and nearly 100,000 members of host communities.
- On 5 April, WFP with the support of UNHCR and ADSSE, launched the distribution of 213 tonnes of food to newly arrived refugees in Ndu (Bas Huélé) and its surroundings. The distribution consisted of rice, peas, and vegetable oil, and targeted 19,917 people (6,009 households) including 250 members of local communities.

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