

Chad: CAR refugee's influx continues

In Southern Chad, CAR refugees have continued to arrive in recent days in border villages following renewed tensions.



Two third of the new CAR refugees are under 18 @ V. Ndakass/HCR

From a little bit over 3,000 registered as of 26th June, they were largely over the cap of 5,000 individuals by the 30th June, and reached 5,570 newly arrived refugees from Central Africa Republic in the town of Mbitoye and surrounding villages of Sourouh and Mini as of 3rd July. All three locations are situated at less than 2 km (Sourouh and Mini) and 7 km (Mbitoye) from the border.

These figures are likely to increase knowing the pace of the arrivals in recent days despite the official closure of the border by Chadian government, which has continued to allow these vulnerable groups on its soil.

Exhausted, weak and traumatised after making their way to Chad, refugees said that they fled renewed tension in the north-western of CAR, at the border with Chad. In the region, fighting opposed on 11th June, in the town of Ngoundaye, armed militiamen, supported by the Anti-Balaka and transhumant livestock farmers escorted through the town by ex-Seleka fighters, according to various reports and refugees' testimonies.

Also although, no fighting has been reported in recent days, the situation remains tense and increasingly volatile with various sources reporting the presence of heavily armed groups in the area fled by the refugees.

For the time being, refugees will be staying in border villages of Sourouh, Mini and Mbitoye, where registration and screening activities are continuing by UNHCR and the CNARR.

Coordination

A multifunction team (**UNHCR, CNARR, UNICEF, ACRA, CSSI, CARE, APLFT, FLM, PAM, AIRD**) is working actively on the ground to provide an emergency assistance to the new arrivals, largely dominated by women and children.

After identifying, in collaboration with local authorities, some villages, located at reasonable distance from the border areas, to host the new refugees, some members of the team are developing the new sites with the building of water points and accommodations. This is in line with the alternative to camp policy, hence UNHCR and its partners are focusing their efforts to host the refugees in Chadian villages rather than camps. Basic social services will be provided in those villages where they will be accessible to both communities easing the refugees' social-economic integration and consolidating the peaceful coexistence.

Vulnerable population

With a majority of women and children – the latter forming two third of the new arrivals – the new refugees has a strong vulnerability profile: over 1150 individuals are identified as vulnerable with specific needs including 467 separated and unaccompanied children. Over 1590 women have been identified as heads of households and considered as women at risk in the emergency context.

Recreational and psychosocial activities are organised in children friendly spaces in Sourouh and Mini for young ones who have been traumatised by the experience.

Dedicated assistances are also provided to them and include distribution non-food items for separated children or elders, monitoring protection and nutritional situation of children as well as distribution of hygienic tissue to women and girls and baby kits to new-borns.

There is also medical assistance carried by the NGO partner CSSI in place, including vaccination targeting pregnant women and children. Between 16th and 30th June, the doctors saw a total of 617 refugees. The main diseases are suspected cases of malaria, parasites and respiratory infections.

WFP's foods have arrived and positioned by LWF for a general distribution, which will start once the UN agency staff arrived in area.

Increase needs

Before these new arrivals, the south and southeast of Chad were already hosting over 67,000 CAR refugees who fled violence and instability in the country in recent years forcing also 56,000 Chadian nationals to return to their country.

This new influx, during the raining season, comes with challenges and need for new human and financial resources to provide appropriated assistance to a population that is vulnerable and traumatised.

UNHCR office in the region will required additional staffing to strengthen its response team and face these sudden new arrivals.

The preparation of the villages identified to host them will also require additional funding.