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HIGHLIGHTS

- Haute Kotto and Ouaka Prefectures remain areas of tension in need of assistance from the humanitarian community
- Insecurity is hindering humanitarian action.
By the end of February, the 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan has only received 5% of the expected resources required for 2017. However, the humanitarian community remains ready to assist the areas of tension in spite of the humanitarian action's chronic under funding.

KEY NUMBERS

# displaced persons	402,240
# Central African refugees	475, 000
Population in need of humanitarian aid	2.2 M
Population affected by food insecurity	2 M

FUNDING

\$399.5 million

Funding required for the 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan

\$19 million

Represents 5% of funds already allocated

OCHA encourages partners and donors to report their budgets and funds through the Financial Tracking Service (FTS). This collective action enables the monitoring of the level of the Humanitarian Response Plan funding, analysis of the gaps and needs, and the making of appropriate strategic decisions for funding allocation. Taking part in FTS contributes to transparency and accountability and helps to make the contribution of aid effective, efficient in a manner that respects humanitarian principles.

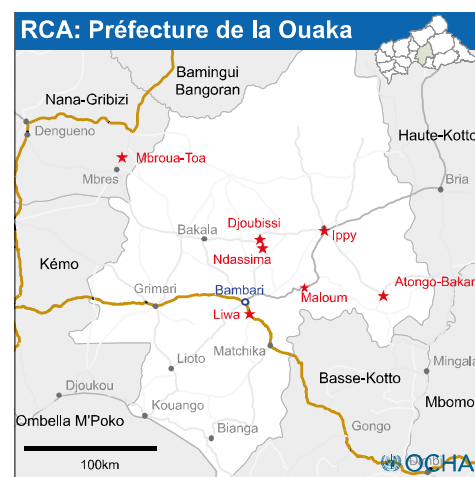
Summary

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Haute Kotto and Ouaka Prefectures remain in the eye of the storm

Ongoing conflicts

The humanitarian aid needs in Central African Republic (CAR) continues to grow. In spite of the positive commitment made at the 2016 Conference of Donors to support the peace building efforts, the country continues to be affected by violent confrontations between rival armed groups over the control of natural resources and a hold of the financial resources. The immediate impact of this state of affairs is an ongoing deterioration of the humanitarian situation with its newly displaced persons and in some cases, the isolation of entire communities. The deterioration of the security climate combined with the emergence of new hot spots seriously limits freedom of movement by affected population thus further aggravating their vulnerability.



Source Carte: SIGCAF carte créée 22 février 2017

More displacements and increased needs

Violent confrontations around Bria – Ippy – Bambari – Grimari during the month of February 2017 have caused great concern for the humanitarian community. Since the fall of Bria, capital of Haute-Kotto in November 2016, the conflicts between armed groups have forced the community members to flee several towns and villages. The coalition of armed groups advancing towards Bambari is particularly worrisome for the protection of civilians, especially the vulnerable communities. In turn, the response to the emerging needs also faces insecurity given the anticipated reduction of the humanitarian space. This is the case for the town of Ippy located half-way between Bria and Bambari (111 km north of Bambari).

Between February 11 and 27 2017, more than 230 women and children were prevented from accessing the local market to buy food, collect water at wells, and access primary services such as health centre for fear of being attacked. Continued efforts by humanitarian partner to set up a mobile clinic to alleviate the suffering were prevented due to ongoing threats by armed groups.

Wounded and ill people were transfer to the Ippy hospital while the remaining community were evacuated and hosted by the community and humanitarian partners in Maloum, a community located 63 Km north of Bambari. The safe passage was facilitated by a joint effort from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the Mission multidimensionnelle intégrée des Nations Unies pour la stabilisation en République

centrafricaine (MINUSCA) and humanitarian partners partnered with local authorities and community leaders. plan underway in Maloum. It is important to note that this new caseload adds to the burden of the host community in Maloum who already supports 4,063 newly displaced persons. This forced movement is the direct consequence of the armed conflicts in Haute-Kotto, Basse Kotto and Ouaka (Ndjoubissi, Ndassima, Ippy, Mbrouchou and Atongo-Bakari).

Security is our highest concern

The rumour of an imminent battle to take over Bambari caused a degree of anguish among the population. The fear persists even though leaders of the armed groups have left Bambari following an ultimatum by the MINUSCA. As a result, businesses remained closed for several days until the situation in Bambari stabilises. In keeping with its mandate to protect civilians, the MINUSCA increased its presence in the region with a focus on maintaining security in the town of Bambari. In parallel, humanitarian actors monitored the situation of more than 50,000 displaced persons hosted in spontaneous camps and by the host community estimated at 160,000 inhabitants. An open conflict in the city of Bambari could further displace and increase the level of vulnerability of the affected population. OCHA in partnership humanitarian actors successfully advocated to prevent a degradation of armed violence, respect of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and humanitarian principles. It highlighted the need for the freedom of movement allowing the affected population to access aid and the humanitarian actors to access beneficiaries as well as ensuring the protection of civilian regardless of their ethnicity, religion or political affiliation.

"It is intolerable for civilians to bear the brunt of the conflicts between armed groups", stated the Humanitarian Coordinator in a February 22 press release on the protection of civilian.

US \$3.1 million needed to save lives in Bria and Bambari

The Central African Republic still has serious humanitarian needs

The emergency Humanitarian Fund (HF) reserve for the CAR allocate funding based on a special appeal launched in January 2017. The amount of \$3.1 million US arrived at a time marked by increased unrest, growing humanitarian needs and unprecedented under-financing of humanitarian action.

The recent crises have led to a large number of people being displaced in Bria and in Bambari. The humanitarian community was able to respond quickly to the needs that are most urgent. However, there are still other needs that must be met. These have not been covered by the fund allocated by the HF, and neither by the allocation of the six million dollars of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF). The CERF also contributed to food assistance for the populations of Bria, Bambari and Kaga-Bandoro.



©OCHA / Ali Abdelrahman Abdelmoula Dawoud. Bria, Haute Kotto Prefecture, CAR (25 February 2017) – A view of the foods available on the market in Bria.

An allocation to implement minimum contingent capacities

The allocation of \$3.1 million of the HF will allow the most urgent and critical needs to be covered to "save lives" in Bambari and Bria.

Seven projects were identified to support coordination and camp management, and deliver basic services such as non-food items, water, hygiene and sanitation, shelter, health, and protection.

Furthermore, the HF allocation supported the establishment of a logistics hub for humanitarians in Bambari. This initiative is intended to provide logistical services to the humanitarian community while it is responding to the crisis in Bria and Bambari. The hub also includes the establishment of a 240m² WikHall, in addition to the 130 m² PAM hangar for storing humanitarian aid.

Hence HF allocation will enable humanitarian actors to provide a comprehensive multi-sectorial response.

The services also include the free transport of humanitarian supplies from Bambari to other areas of the Ouaka and Haute Kotto Prefectures.

It is worth mentioning that during the last three years, funding for the humanitarian action was at its lowest level in 2016 with the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) financed at 36.2%. At the same time, the needs continue to grow.

The HRP funding for 2017 is US \$399.5 million. OCHA encourages partners and donors to report their funding by using the Financial Tracking Service (FTS- <http://fts.unocha.org>; fts@un.org). This collective reporting makes it easier to monitor the level of the Plan's financing, analyze the gaps and needs and to make appropriate strategic decisions on funding allocations.

Focus on gender-based violence in Bambari

At the height of armed violence and confrontations between communities in Bambari and in the CAR, an increase in the number of rapes, massive displacements of women and girls, an increased number of unaccompanied children and degrading acts between women and men of the same family has been reported.

According to the Gender-Based Violence Information Management System (GBVIMS), 11,110 cases of gender-based violence were reported in 2016, including 2,313 cases of sexual violence. An estimated 1,666 rape cases were reported for the period from January to October 2016, representing 17% of the violence cases. However, these numbers are largely under-reported because of the difficulty in obtaining an accurate number of cases of violence and the risk of stigmatizing the victims. During this last crisis, Bambari has not been spared.

The common theme of the displaced women in Bambari

Women affected by high levels of conflict in the countryside left everything behind and sought protection in Bambari. They bare marks of the traumatic events that forced them to flee their home. Such is the case for Violette and Sakina (not their real name). Violette and her new born sister witnessed the killing of their mom. They are now hosted by the Sisters of Notre Dame's parish. Sakina loss of husband and is hosted by the community in Bambari and receives support from a women's organization. Violence is the thread running through the stories of these women.

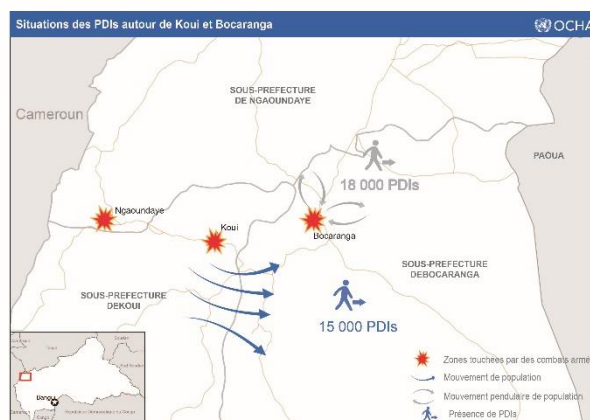
Violence follows them to the displacement sites

Displaced camps offer a space for affected women to live and do trade. In spite of the violence they have suffered, they try to live a normal life. However, displaced camps does not necessarily guaranty that women and their children are protected. Gender based violence including rape and harassment continue to occur even. Single household are particularly vulnerable to these abuses. They are also facing serious challenges when building their shelters.

From January to October 2016, 9,643 cases of gender-based violence were recorded. 86%, or 8,312 of them were violence against women which included 1,666 rapes.

Humanitarian access is reduced in Kouï

What happens to displaced families?



The humanitarian situation prevailing in the Ouaka and Haute Kotto Prefectures is overshadowing the one in the Ouham-Pendé Prefecture. Since the forced displacement of the population in Kouï on the 26 September 2016, 15,000 people have taken refuge in Bocaranga. Many more are hiding in the bush deprived of any humanitarian assistance. The ongoing conflicts between armed groups in the sub-Prefectures of Kouï, Bocaranga and Ngaoundaye are keeping the population in displacement sites in the area. The

tension among these groups has prevented all humanitarian access in Kouï since the end of September.

Heading towards the disappearance of humanitarian space

This situation described above is a clear example of how the humanitarian space can shrink when there is ongoing insecurity. Since September 2016, nearly all attempts to gain access to Kouï by humanitarian workers have been prevented by armed men.

Only one international NGO was able to get access in mid-December 2016 after much negotiation and for a very limited time. This prevented them from carrying out an assessment of the humanitarian situation. The gaps in humanitarian aid created by the armed groups is such that the response has been reduced to a small part of Kouï.

During the latter part of 2016, several NGOs in Bocaranga temporarily suspended their activities due to insecurity. Up to now, OCHA has been advocating to armed groups for humanitarian access have not succeeded in gaining unconditional access to the population in need.

The challenge of protecting civilians

Civilians are victims of attacks and reprisals by armed groups. For example, on 3 February, an attack on Bocaranga led to dozens of civilians' deaths and many wounded. Violence does not spare humanitarians. During that crisis, one of the humanitarian partner bases was ravaged and burned down. More than 18,000 displaced Bocaranga residents hiding in the bush and surroundings had to remain there following rumors of further attacks by armed groups. Nevertheless, humanitarian workers were able to bring an emergency response to the those in need, with medical care, access to water, hygiene and sanitation, as well as food and nutritional security.

Closure of displacement sites: Boeing rises from its ashes

Prior to 2013, the Boeing district, located in the Bimbo commune between the M'Poko international airport and the PK5 district in the 3rd Arrondissement was the breadbasket of the capital. Agriculture was the main activity in the area. Fields extended to the end the space separating Boeing from the M'Poko airport. Small traders sold vegetables and various food products to the community and traders in Bangui's central market.

With outbreak of the armed conflict in 2013, the greenbelt of Bangui became the support base for the armed groups. After several bloody conflicts, the district was more than 80% destroyed. Houses were burned to the ground and others completely destroyed by successive pillaging. To save their lives, thousands of these suburban residents had no choice but to flee to the M'Poko displacement site.

In December 2016, as a response to the "Home for Christmas" initiative, more than 900 people decided to return to their old neighbourhood after spending three years on the M'Poko site. Although returning home is meant to be a happy event, everything must be rebuilt, from homes to roads and other infrastructure.

In Boeing, men and women look for ways to earn a living. Victorine and her family came back home to Boeing after being displaced at the M'Poko site. With the help of the NGO ACTED, she was able to have her two room house built. In front of her house, she tries to make ends meet by selling spices and condiments. She also makes and sells homemade liquor.



©OCHA/Yaye N. SENE. Boeing. Bimbo Commune, Ombella M'Poko Prefecture, CAR (17 February 2017) – Victorine sells condiments and homemade liquor in front of her house still under construction.

Further down the block Pierre, a young man who is severely disabled, established a stall to sell some basic products. A few days prior, (6 February), the death of an armed group leader in the surrounding neighbourhood of PK5 created panic in Boeing. Pierre tells of the impact of that insecurity on his business. "Before that happened, I used to make between 3,000 and 4,000 FCFA (\$6.48 U.S.). It's been more difficult in the last few days. People are afraid of leaving their homes". In fact, compared to the previous weeks, Boeing is quiet. The streets are empty with only an occasion sound of tools in the distance.

Norbert, a member of the registration committee for victims of the Boeing district adds a more positive note. "The neighbourhood is usually quiet and half empty during the day. Most of the returnees go to work in other sections of the capital. They return home in parallel with fields workers at sundown thus creating a livelier atmosphere at night". Norbert's views are not widely shared as the majority of residents feel that level of insecurity remains high.

A joint committee to protect the residents in the neighbourhood

The incidents that occurred on the 6 and 8 of February affected the peaceful living in the neighbourhood. Citizen responded by establishing a neighbourhood watch. A committee combining both Christians and Muslims youth guard and protect the population. They stated that "We were all born here, we grew up together, we no longer want to be divided by conflicts that help only some of the people". We only want security and to help our parents get their lives back", said Idriss, a committee member from Boeing.

Living without basic social services

The people in the district are rebuilding their homes amid the ruins with help from ACTED which provided building material. With funding from ECHO, the NGO plans to build two-room houses for each of the 500 families. Two hundred more will be built with HCR financial support.

Yet most of the wells in the area are non-operational after three years of neglect. Many of the locals and returnees believe that bodies were dumped in the wells.

In Bangui and Bimbo, 20 sites were totally or partially closed enabling nearly 12,976 families or 41,339 displaced persons to return home.

Some of the returnees have to go to the nearest PK5 for drinking water more than 800 metres. Some of them turn a blind eye to the quality of the well water and drink it even knowing it might be dangerous. "We go several hundred metres to get drinking water at the neighbouring district. After the February 6 incidents in the 3rd Arrondissement, some are afraid to go to the PK5 and drink contaminated water which may make them sick", explained Derville who returned recently to area.

A survey conducted by the *Fondation suisse de déminage* (FSD) revealed that it is necessary to drill new wells to support the *Société de distribution d'eau en Centrafrique* (SODECA) network in order to provide the entire district with drinking water. Unfortunately, the drilling project is on hold due to lack of funding.

The district also does not have a health centre. Prior to the final closure of the M'Poko site, the returnees could still go to the health centre operated by Doctors Without Borders (MSF). "We don't know what to do when our children get sick at night. We have to walk to the Mamadou Mbaïki health centre in the 3rd Arrondissement", says Florence sadly, a returnee from the M'Poko site. A maternity health centre is being built by MSF. Indeed, one of the main concerns is the lack of health facilities.



©OCHA/Virginie Bero Boeing. Bimbo Commune, Ombella M'Poko Prefecture, CAR (17 February 2017) – A woman stops to catch her breath while wheeling a heavy load of water containers.

The Boeing district currently has 200 returned families. Since the "*Noël à la maison*" ("Home for Christmas") initiative by the government with the support from humanitarian workers, thousands of displaced have returned to their former neighbourhoods since December. Twenty sites have been completely or partially closed in Bangui and Bimbo resulting in the return of nearly 12,976 families or 41,339 displaced persons.

Alleviating the suffering of vulnerable populations: An ADIH NGO challenge

The *Action pour le développement intégral des humains* (ADIH)'s was created in 2012 to support local development. The urgency of the 2013 crisis and the extent of its needs forced the organisation to re-direct its activities towards humanitarian aid in the Mambéré Kadéï, Sangha Mbaéré and Nana Mambéré Prefectures. From its head office in Berbérati, the ADIH NGO is ensuring the provision of health services, education, food security and protection. It is conducting a widespread program to help orphans with funding from INTERACT and Vision Trust International. Thanks to the support from its funding partners, ADIH helped 684 orphans in nine towns across the country: Gamboula, Berberati, Dédé Mokouba, Nola, Carnot, Douaka, Bania. Some of the vulnerable children have registered at school at the (*Faculté de théologie biblique* FATEB) in Bangui.

ADIH is particularly active in assisting Pygmy children in the Sangha Mbaéré and Mambéré Kadéï Prefectures. Pygmy are a minority group often stigmatized and rejected at public schools. As a result, parents are often forced to remove their children from school and revert back to traditional ways like hunting and gathering.

ADIH opened three schools to give the children another chances to obtain their right to an education. These were built in the villages of Yondo, Kanza and Lindjombo in the Bayanga sub-Prefecture 225 kilometres from Berberati. They provide free education to more than 300 Pygmy children. ADIH also supplies them with food rations and look after the teachers. This minority group was not spared from the armed conflicts which erupted in 2013 and the people fled to the forest. Through awareness campaigns and peace and social cohesion messages, ADIH was able to convince the Pygmies fleeing armed groups, maltreatment

and torture to come out of their hidings. Following request by ADIH, FAO funding has allowed Pygmy families to enjoy the benefits of a seeding program. "It's a way of taking care of these minorities and protecting them from being badly treated by other communities", said Sylvain Lima, the Executive Director of ADIH.



© ADIH -NGO- Pygmy children in front of their village school in Kanza.

Moreover, to help reduce the food insecurity in the south-west region of Central Africa in 2016, ADIH, in partnership with FAO, distributed 33,000 tons of planting kits, which included two tons of gardening tools and 31 tons of seeds for 1,000 families. The assistance was provided to a total of 500 families in the Bilolo commune and 500 more in the Yobé Sangha commune. "We are especially pleased with this success because ADIH was the first humanitarian group to reach these villages that were isolated because insecurity and impassable roads" said the elated Executive Director.

As for the health sector, ADIH opened a facility in Gamboula in the Sangha Mbaéré, which has become a district hospital recognized as such by the government. It is a 200 bed hospital with a surgery unit, laboratory, maternity unit, ophthalmology services and a pharmacy. Eight dispensaries were also opened in Bayanga, Nola, Bania, Carnot, Baoro, Douaka and Amadagaza. Services are also provided to HIV-AIDS patients.

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The good news

\$6 million for food security in CAR

The Deputy General Secretary for humanitarian affairs and Emergency Coordinator, Stephen O'Brien, approved the allocation of \$6 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), or 3.5 billion CFA francs to assist the humanitarian response for new emergencies in the Central African Republic. This will enable the United Nations World Food Program (WFP) to assist 36,800 people who are recently affected by food insecurity in Kaga Bandoro, Bambari and Bria, because of the increase in the number of crises during the last part of 2016. CERF's emergency fund will be used to provide 3,600 tons of food to alleviate emergency food needs for 4 months. Vital assistance will be provided to 12,800 people in Bria and surrounding area, to 10,000 in Bambari, Grimari and surroundings, and 14,000 in the Kaga Bandoro district.



©OCHA/Ali Abdelrahman Abdelmoula Dawoud. Bria, Haute Kotto Prefecture, CAR (25 February 2017) – An example of food produces available at the Bria market.

Resumption of UNHAS flights towards Kaga Bandoro

UNHAS CAR began restoring its regular flights towards Kaga Bandoro on Saturday, 18 February 2017. They had been suspended since 3 February for security reasons and because of the poor condition of the landing strip. Moreover, the presence of debris and foreign objects on the runway made airplane landings and take-offs dangerous. With the support of the humanitarian community, a security strip was erected along the runway which was also cleaned off. With the October 2016 crisis, a displacement camp was spontaneously set up close to the International Forces base which is bordering the airstrip at the Kaga Bandoro aerodrome.



©UNHAS. Kaga Bandoro, Nana Gribizi Prefecture
- Improved landing strip.

In brief

A summary of the Central African humanitarian situation in Yaoundé

The Central African Republic remains an absolute priority for humanitarian actors. Since September 2016, the situation continues to deteriorate bringing with it a significant increase of needs because of the resurgence of violence in several towns while at the same time humanitarian aid has never been so under-funded. Bambari, Kaga Bandoro, Bria, Kod and Bocaranga have become emblematic of this deterioration.

The goal is to ensure that amidst other pressing emergencies, the humanitarian crisis that unfolds silently in CAR is not forgotten or ignored. To this end, OCHA has multiplied efforts to bring this crisis to the attention of the international community. On March 15, OCHA along with United Nations Member States and the diplomatic held an information session in Yaoundé for funding partners. Such initiatives will be scale up in the future.

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