



# Operational Context

## Political and security situation in Central African Republic

- As of 04 February 2021, local authorities in neighbouring countries reported the arrival of over 107,000 individuals who fled CAR due to escalating violence surrounding the presidential and legislative elections held on 27 December 2020. While the vast majority (92,053 persons) reportedly sought safety in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), others fled to Cameroon (5,730), Chad (6,726) and the Republic of Congo (2,984) despite borders between CAR and these countries remaining officially closed due to COVID-19-related movement restrictions.
- In addition, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), some 100,000 persons are still internally displaced within CAR as a direct result of the post-electoral violence and the ongoing tensions. Most live in deplorable conditions in the bush surrounding their villages for fear of further attacks. New waves of displacement are recorded almost daily and are expected to continue as the conflict shows no signs of abating.
- Humanitarians are increasingly targeted, particularly through the looting of offices and the theft of vehicles. According to OCHA, 59 such incidents occurred in December 2020 including one humanitarian worker killed and five others injured, nearly double the monthly average of incidents recorded in 2020. This upward trend continued in January 2021 with 66 incidents, the highest number of incidents ever recorded in a single month. A dire security situation which reduces humanitarian access to the affected population hampers the delivery of assistance while the needs are growing.
- In this tense political context, the CAR Constitutional Court validated 22 out of 140 deputies in the first round of legislative election. The court also announced the cancellation of election in 13 constituencies, due to violence, on 1 February. A total of 118 seats remain to be filled in the second round, the date for which has not yet been set.
- Since the confirmation of his re-election on 18 January, President Touadéra has also initiated peace efforts which are receiving growing support from religious and traditional leaders. While some armed groups are showing willingness to engage, the political situation remains tense and the conflict shows no signs of abating. To help restore peace and maintain stability and security, a reinforcement of the MINUSCA is also being considered.
- In a statement issued on 03 February, the Secretary-General took note of the final results of the first round of legislative elections proclaimed by the Constitutional Court. Mr Guterres also stated that he remained very concerned about armed clashes and threats to civilians in the country and strongly condemned the violence. Reiterating his call for a global ceasefire, the Secretary General urged all parties to immediately halt hostilities. He also declared that perpetrators of grave violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, as well as serious crimes, including the killing of civilians and UN peacekeepers, must be held accountable.

## Population movements and border monitoring

- While local authorities in the neighbouring countries reported less new arrivals at the end of January, inside CAR the number of IDPs is increasing.
- While scaling up its presence and response in the main hosting areas, UNHCR is working with the authorities to monitor the borders and ensure the new arrivals have access to asylum and that those with specific needs are identified and provided with adequate assistance.
- Adding to the nearly 1,3 million people who were already displaced within CAR or in neighbouring countries, this latest displacement crisis brings the number of displaced Central Africans to over 1,5 million, representing almost a third of the country's total population.

# UNHCR Emergency Response

## L1 and L2 Emergency Declarations

- With further displacement expected, UNHCR is scaling up its response in CAR and the hosting countries to address the growing humanitarian needs.
- On 21 January, a Level 2 emergency has been declared for the UNHCR Operation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and a Level 1 emergency is declared for UNHCR's Operations in the Central African Republic, Cameroon, Chad and in the Republic of Congo.
- This decision will help structure the scale up of UNHCR operations' preparedness and response activities to better address the protection needs of refugees, internally displaced persons and other populations affected by this new crisis in CAR.

## Central African Republic

- The security situation remains volatile in vast areas of CAR, hampering access and humanitarian assistance to internally displaced populations. Protection is among the most urgent needs of the internally displaced. Cases of sexual violence against women and girls and child protection issues, such as unaccompanied and separated children and forced recruitment, were reported across the country.
- The presence of armed groups in IDP sites is also a cause of great concern. Besides violating the humanitarian and civilian nature of those sites, this exposes those internally displaced populations to grave protection risks, including forced recruitment, exploitation and extortion.
- The disruption of main road connecting CAR to Cameroon continues to prevent the delivery of supplies causing a rapid increase in the prices of essential goods with dire consequences on an already vulnerable population. Food, primary health care products, water and sanitation, essential household items, and shelter are the most urgent humanitarian needs.
- Despite these major operational challenges and the growing insecurity in many parts of the country, UNHCR is stepping up its emergency response to the affected displaced. From its nine offices throughout the country, UNHCR continues its area-based protection monitoring via community relays and key informants in affected areas and maintains an alert mechanism to ensure quick response to SGBV incidents. Focus is put on strengthening community structures to ensure a solid community-based protection response.
- UNHCR started the distribution of Non-Food Items (NFI) kits consisting of mats, blankets, kitchen kits, jerry cans to 4,600 individuals (including IDPs and hosts). Additional distributions are planned but the stock of 18,000 NFI kits available in Cameroon could not be delivered so far due to the major disruptions on main supply roads.
- UNHCR is collaborating with national authorities, OCHA, humanitarian partners as well as MINUSCA in Bangui and at local level to address these operational challenges and organize assistance for IDPs where access is possible. Key coordination fora have also been activated at the regional level, including the Protection Cluster Protection and CCCM Cluster led by UNHCR, to coordinate the response.

## Democratic Republic of Congo

- As of 29 January 2021, 92,053 individuals from CAR are reported to have arrived in the DRC, according to estimates provided by local authorities. A biometric registration exercise is being conducted by UNHCR in coordination with the National Commission for Refugee (CNR) to have a more accurate count of the new arrivals and to better assess their protection needs. As of 2 February, 15,722 refugees have been registered in Nord-Ubangi and the Bas-Uelé provinces. UNHCR's three mobile registration teams, consisting of 40 staff,

will continue this exercise over the coming weeks to reach all new arrivals, who are scattered across at least 40 localities. UNHCR also continues to monitor the situation at the border along the Ubangi River while engaging with local authorities, state services and border security forces to ensure unhindered access to territory for asylum-seekers.

- Most of the new arrivals are still staying close to the border where they remain exposed to risks of attacks by armed groups from CAR. UNHCR is preparing to relocate these groups to identified sites in Modale and Goya villages, further from the border. To promote an out-of-camp approach, UNHCR is assessing sites where refugees can be settled in the local communities, and where local infrastructure and social services could be reinforced and economic activities developed to ensure better protection and boost self-reliance for refugees and their hosts.
- Initial needs assessments conducted in the main hosting areas in DRC indicate that there are urgent needs for water, food, shelter, and better access to health and sanitation to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other diseases. UNHCR's partners are treating patients and distributing medicine, however the needs continue to increase with cases of malaria, respiratory tract infections and diarrhoea among refugees.
- UNHCR has been distributing emergency supplies to the most vulnerable families in South Ubangi Province, and is preparing to roll out distributions in North Ubangi and Bas Uele Provinces. Transport of emergency supplies has been a challenge due to the extremely poor condition of the roads leading to areas hosting new arrivals. As these areas risk becoming inaccessible during the upcoming rainy season, UNHCR is pre-positioning emergency supplies and is fundraising to bring more supplies from Kinshasa through airlifts or trucking to provide both immediate assistance and increase stocks in warehouses ahead of the rainy season, which begins in March.
- From 1 to 3 February the UNHCR Representative and UN Humanitarian Coordinator led a joint mission to Nord-Ubangi Province, along with the National Commission for Refugees (CNR) and representatives from UNICEF, WFP, IOM, OCHA and ACTED. The mission included a visit to UNHCR's ongoing biometric registration activities, sites hosting new arrivals along the river, and to Modale village where new arrivals may be relocated. Meetings were held with refugee representatives, partners, and the Deputy Governor of Nord Ubangi to assess needs and discuss plans for further assistance.
- UNHCR is working closely with the Provincial Government, the National Commission for Refugees (CNR), UN agencies, implementing partners (ADSSE, AIDES, AIRD and ACTED) and operational partners (Congolese Red Cross, MSF Belgium and LIZADEL). UNHCR is also liaising with the UN Country Team in Kinshasa to provide information on the refugee situation and the emergency and protection response and ensure proper coordination with all relevant partners.

## Cameroon

- As of 04 February, a total of 5,730 new Central African refugees have crossed into Cameroon, mostly in the Garoua Boulai area (90% of new arrivals) and further south in Kentzou in the Batouri region. In collaboration with national authorities, UNHCR continues to monitor the border to ensure people fleeing have access to Cameroon's territory and to asylum.
- Preventive measures are in place to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 contamination, including health screening and a quarantine period for suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cases. So far, 35 new arrivals have tested positive to COVID-19 and have been put in isolation with UNHCR teams assisting them and their families.
- UNHCR is putting in place a quick alert system to help identify and reach new arrivals who crossed through irregular border points and directly settled within the local population to ensure they can be documented, and their protection needs addressed.
- So far, 3,586 of the new arrivals have been biometrically registered by UNHCR and 2,427 protection documents were issued in Garoua Boulai, including 976 Family Composition Attestations (CFAs) and 1,451 refugee Identification Cards. The registration exercise in Batouri is under preparation.

- Protection screenings are also conducted upon arrival to allow for the identification of those with specific needs who are prioritized for assistance. So far, over 15% of the identified newly arrived refugees have specific needs, including 26 separated and non-accompanied children and 5 survivors of SGBV who have been identified and assisted.
- A total of 204 students (170 primary and 34 secondary) are among the new arrivals. UNHCR is advocating with the local authorities to ensure they can attend the public-school system along with the Cameroon nationals and the CAR refugees already living in Cameroon.
- UNHCR is continuing to settle newly arrived refugees to the Gado camp. As of 30 January, 1,121 refugees have been transferred to this site where they were provided with one emergency shelter per household as well as food and NFIs.
- As the Gado camp is reaching full capacity, the UNHCR-led CCCM cluster is working with local authorities to identify a location for a new site and formalise the allocation of the space. In line with UNHCR's out-of-camp approach, eight villages have been also identified to receive refugees. UNHCR and its partners are assessing the needs in terms of construction/rehabilitation of shelters, water infrastructure (pumps, latrines, and showers), NFIs and foods to ensure these communities can adequately host the new arrivals while seeing the quality of services improved.
- While scaling up its response focusing WASH, health, education, and protection (including registration), UNHCR continues to closely coordinate with the authorities and its humanitarian partners, at both Yaoundé and field level, to ensure an effective a coherent response.

## Chad

- As of 04 February, 6,726 new CAR refugees arrived in Chad and have been registered by UNHCR. Among them, 795 persons with specific protection needs have been identified, including breastfeeding women, survivors of SGBV or women at risk of SGBV, single-parent families, unaccompanied children, and elderlies. Psychosocial and medical support is provided to survivors of SGBV and PEP KITS are available for urgent GBV response, with UNFPA support.
- A mandatory 14-day quarantine was introduced for all new arrivals to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Two quarantine centers of a total capacity of 800 persons are operational. A mobile clinic is also available for the new arrivals who require health assistance. The most severe cases are transferred to the district hospital in Gore.
- UNHCR and its partners provide refugees in border villages with emergency assistance. With the support of WFP, over 3,500 refugees have already received food rations and a distribution for 3,000 more refugees is underway. NFIs kits (including blankets, mats, Jerry cans, kitchen kits, mosquito nets), have also been distributed to 2,158 refugees.
- Transfers from the border villages to Goré are ongoing as UNHCR is expanding the Doholo site to relocate new arrivals. Each household transferred to Doholo is provided with one emergency shelter, as well as with food rations and NFIs (including blankets and mats buckets, mosquito nets, mats, blankets, and kitchen kits). Meanwhile, out of the 1600 shelters planned, 400 shelters have been completed (25%) and 115 are under construction.
- UNHCR continues to coordinate closely with the local authorities, the CNARR, WFP and other partners to respond to this situation. On 19 January, health sector actors (CSSI, MSF-Hollande & ACF) started a joint needs assessment to inform the response in the areas hosting new arrivals.

## Republic of Congo

- As of 4 February, 2,984 people in 1,001 families had crossed into Congo, where they are staying with host families and in other existing structures in local communities. This includes 234 new arrivals to Kpakaya,



Betou department, identified on 3 February among whom 50 per cent are women, 24 per cent are children under 5 years, and 26 per cent are children aged 5 to 17 years.

- UNHCR continues to monitor the border in coordination with local authorities and other stakeholders and is conducting emergency registration with the National Committee for Refugee Assistance (CNAR) and the Immigration and Police Services. UNHCR's health partner (TSF) is conducting systematic health screening for the new arrivals, to prevent the risk of spreading COVID-19.
- Jointly with partners (WFP, Terre sans Frontiers, and AARREC), UNHCR is assessing needs of new arrivals to inform the multi-sector response, as well as identifying the most vulnerable to be relocated to an adequate settlement in Betou. On 28 January, UNHCR launched a distribution of emergency supplies for new arrivals aimed at covering their basic needs.

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