

# CAR SITUATION

## UNHCR CAR UPDATE

### JULY 2016 HIGHLIGHTS

#### KEY FIGURES

**384,314**

IDPs in CAR of whom **149,080** in sites and **235,234** in host families

**119,117**

IDPs in Bangui of whom **49,130** in sites and the rest in host families

**204**

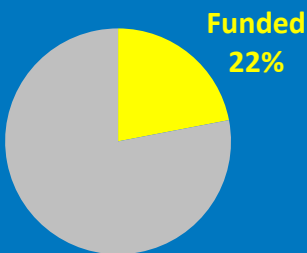
SGBV survivors have received psychosocial support through mobile listening centers in 6 provinces

#### FUNDING

**USD**

**52,249,231**

Requested for the situation



#### PRIORITIES

- Prepare the Tripartite Agreement for voluntary return of Central African refugees from Chad
- Seek a durable solution for the displaced population in M'Poko International Airport site
- Emergency response to the needs of South Sudanese refugees in Bambouti

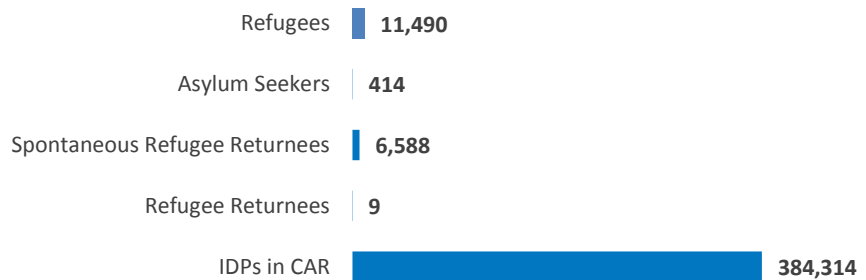


*UNHCR Representative, Mr. Kouassi Lazare Etien, meets with refugees from the Central African Republic in Timangolo Camp, Cameroon. Alexander Lewis/UNHCR/Timangolo Camp*

- The UNHCR Representative in CAR conducted a mission to Cameroon to meet with Central African refugees and to address the issue of potential returns.
- The Government called a meeting to agree the process for the eventual closure of the M'Poko International Airport IDP site.
- Spontaneous returns began from the St. Charles Luanga and Four Square IDP sites in Bangui.
- The violence that was sparked during June in Ngaoundaye, Ouham Pende, subsided in the middle of the month, after 6,000 refugees fled into Chad and Cameroon.

#### Population of concern

A total of **402,815** people of concern including 4,058 newly-registered South Sudanese refugees



## RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

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On Friday, 22 July, the Minister for Social Affairs and National Reconciliation, Mrs. Virginie Mbaïkoua, convened a meeting with the humanitarian community to discuss the return of IDPs from the site at M'Poko International Airport, Bangui. Finding a more permanent solution to move away from this site, at which 28,000 IDPs live in tents less than 50 metres from the runway, has been a priority since the new government assumed office. During the meeting, it was agreed that a profiling exercise would be conducted, and four working groups were constituted to address: security; communications; social cohesion, and basic social services.

The framework for the return of displaced persons living in the M'Poko International Airport site was agreed at a meeting on 22 July. The committee tasked with relocation and returns created four separate sub-committees to focus on: security; communications; social cohesion, and basic social services. UNHCR and IOM were nominated by the Humanitarian Coordinator to lead discussions with the Government of CAR. UNHCR is playing a lead role as the principal conduit between the government and the population of concern.

### Security

**Zemio:** The presence of Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) elements in the south-east of the country continued to impact security. On 6 July, two transport vehicles carrying children home from school for holidays were ambushed, with all goods stolen and two children kidnapped. The LRA was also responsible for the abduction of eight individuals returning from a MINUSCA training event in Obo. The attack took place 13km outside the town, and those captured were subsequently released later the same day.

**Ouham Pende:** A well-known Anti-Balaka leader, Benjamin Bodoro (a.k.a. Humble) was assassinated in Ngaoundaye on 10 July 2016, leading to fears of a resurgence in violence in the area just as the June unrest was petering out. The perpetrator, a well-known criminal named Ali, also stole a large number of arms during the assassination.

**Bambari:** Following a number of cases of armed robbery targeting refugees during the second half of the month, UNHCR met with the community leaders and agreed to temporarily halt movement between Pladana Ouaka Camp and Bambari. At the beginning of July, Bambari was subjected to ongoing fighting between opponents of General Ali Darrass and those loyal to him. Initial estimates suggest that 13 people were injured and at least 10 killed, though the final toll may be higher.

### Consequence on humanitarian work:

**Kaga-Bandoro:** An ICRC convoy was attacked in Ngoumourou, 35km from Kaga-Bandoro on the road to Ouandago. Assailants believed to be from an ex-Seleka group stole money, communications equipment, and other items, though staff were not physically harmed.

### Consequence on civilians:

**Kabo:** Approximately 50 armed Foulata Peuhls under the command of Amadou Rebo withdrew into the bush near Kabo at the beginning of the month. This came after a number of incidents in Ouandago, Batangafo and Bambari. The presence of this armed group created new protection concerns, with the local population left unable to safely access their fields and crops, and two civilians (including a 13-year-old child) killed in crossfire.



## Operations

The UNHCR Representative in Central African Republic, Kouassi Lazare Etien, conducted a mission to Cameroon during the last week of July. The mission provided a welcome opportunity to meet with Central African refugees, to observe the conditions in which they are living, and to begin discussing their future voluntary return. In Timangolo Camp, some 45km from the border with CAR, refugees from the Peuhl community confirmed that they would like to return in the future, but that they had some reservations about the security situation in their areas of origin as well as the need to ensure that they would not face discrimination upon return. The Representative also met with interlocutors from the Government of Cameroon. During these meetings, he thanked the authorities for their continuing support to Central African refugees, and discussed the prospect of future returns. This visit came ahead of August's series of meetings with the Government of Central African Republic and the Government of Chad to agree the main components of a tripartite agreement to facilitate the future voluntary return of Central African refugees.

The steady stabilization of the political situation in CAR led to UNHCR declaring the end of the emergency situation towards the end of July. This declaration does not signal a shift in humanitarian needs, but means that the operation can begin putting a greater focus on long-term durable solutions within the country, and on working to generate an environment that is more conducive to large-scale returns.

## Protection

### Sexual and gender based violence:

During the month of July, a total of 96 incidents of SGBV were recorded in the Western zone of the country. The central prefectures saw a marked spike in the number of human rights violations, with 131 cases recorded during the reporting period in axes covered by Kaga Bandoro. The sudden increase appears to be linked to the pronounced movement of troops within the area. These cases included 49 physical assaults and 7 accusations of witchcraft. Robbery and arbitrary detention were also prominent amongst the cases reported. A further 94 incidents of SGBV were recorded in Bambari and Kouango, 13 of which took place in the Pladama Ouaka refugee camp.

In Bangui and its surrounding areas, a total of 121 incidences of SGBV were recorded and assisted by UNHCR and its partners. The ability to respond to SGBV cases was enhanced this month by the opening of a counselling centre in the town of M'baiki. This centre, which provides psychosocial support to SGBV survivors, is the second to open in Lobaye Prefecture in recent months, a first centre in Boda having become operational in May. The humanitarian community also intervened on 28 cases of children being accused of witchcraft in Bangui and Yaloke (Ombella M'Poko).

### Internally Displaced Persons

As reflected by the gradual reduction in the IDP population in CAR, populations in 384,314 represents a reduction of approximately 7,000 displaced persons from the figures for the month of June. The displacement situation remains complex, with populations divided between sites and hosting populations. Some 26 sites remain open in Bangui and Bimbo with 49,130 inhabitants, whilst a further 66 sites across the rest of country host 99,950 individuals. The majority of IDPs, 235,234 individuals, are living with host families around the country.

Of particular note, the population of the St. Charles Luanga site, in Begoua near Bangui, spontaneously returned to their areas of origin following sufficient improvements in security. The 87 households concerned benefitted from return assistance in the form of NFI kits, and from protection monitoring missions to assess the situation in the return areas. A further 73 households departed from the nearby Four Square site, with a small number opting to remain due to ongoing insecurity in Bambari, their area of origin. This household is unwilling to be temporarily relocated to another IDP camp and has no possibility of being hosted by a family in Bangui. The family has been receiving specific follow-up in protection monitoring activities.

## **Refugee Outflows**

Despite the broader outlook improving, the violence that flared up during mid-June in Ngaoundaye, Ouham Pende had profound effects in July. Sparked by disagreements between Peuhl herders and local Arab businessmen in mid-June, the fighting spiralled when ex-Seleka and anti-Balaka groups also became embroiled in the dispute. The situation somewhat stabilised as July wore on, but not until more than 6,000 people had fled the country. The majority, 5,643, of those seeking refuge outside the country, crossed into adjacent areas of Chad, whilst a further 555 fled westwards into Cameroon.

## **Refugees**

During July, UNHCR took further steps to increase its footprint in Bambouti. A joint mission by UNHCR and the National Commission for Refugees, which began on 10 June, was concluded at the beginning of the month. The mission undertook individual registration, revealing a population of 4,058 individuals (1,686 households). UNHCR CAR is maintaining regular contact with its sister operation in South Sudan in case the prevailing insecurity leads to new refugee influxes to Bambouti.

Since the arrival of the influx to Bambouti, UNHCR and other humanitarian actors have carried out multiple assessments in the initial stages, identifying immediate concerns from Sustainable Nutrition, Health, WASH, Shelter, Education, and Logistics. Urgent assistance was delivered: emergency shelter was provided in the form of plastic sheeting, kitchen sets, and plastic mattresses for sleeping. The provision of adequate drinking water remains an urgent priority.

By late July, UNHCR had created a Field Office in Bambouti, solidifying its presence in the area and working to improve the protection environment. Partnerships have been agreed with two NGOs – JUPEDEC and Vision to Change the World – responsible respectively for distribution activities and for Health and WASH.

Meanwhile the insecurity in the border area coupled with the withdrawal of UPDF from this location may expose refugees to cross-border attacks and harassment from LRA. UNHCR has also been facing difficulties in deploying staff to Bambouti, and those on the ground are often unable to depart until long after the planned date. The office is now contemplating a relocation to Obo which would bring the refugees to a place in which basic services and security forces are present.

## **Returnees**

The month of July saw a new wave of returns from Chad. The returnee families settled in Moyenne-Sido, a site for relocated households. The new arrivals benefitted from protection monitoring but partner INTERSOS ensured that they were registered, bringing the total number of returnees arriving in the district since the beginning of the year to 112 households (440 individuals). Across the country, a total of 6,597 Central African refugees have returned to the country during 2016, the vast majority of whom (6,588) have done so spontaneously.

## **Reintegration**

During the last week of July, UNHCR Protection staff undertook a mission to assess sustainable return and reintegration in Lobaye prefecture. The mission saw a stark contrast in the capacity for sustainable return in urban centres such as Boda, versus that in the surrounding villages. Staff observed that the majority of those returning to Boda had been displaced over the border into neighbouring Cameroon and Chad, whilst those from nearby villages had been displaced to local urban centres.

Prospects of return to villages remain slim for the moment, since the rural areas have suffered from a comparatively higher level of destruction than has been seen in the urban areas. Many families fled villages seeking relative safety in Boda, and rented properties during their stay there. The return of those families originating from Boda has therefore driven many of the temporary inhabitants into secondary displacement. When asked whether they would be willing to return to their villages, many cited not just the structural damage to their homes but also a perception that the rest of the community is not willing to welcome them back. This year to date, a total of 405 individuals (approximately 81 families) have returned to their villages in Lobaye Prefecture.

## **Housing, Land and Property rights issues**

The occupation of civil property by armed groups remains a pressing issue in Kaga-Bandoro, with the political situation leading to the problem becoming ever more entrenched. Alongside its partner NRC, UNHCR continues to advocate on



behalf of those who have been dispossessed, but a comprehensive, lasting solution will only be possible following a thorough disarmament programme. During July, trainings on Housing, Land and Property rights were delivered to the owners of IDP sites in order to better sensitise them to the issues facing displaced populations, as well as to community representatives to disseminate the message amongst the population. A total of 35 women and 96 men were provided with training during the past months, bringing the number trained since the beginning of the year to 5,680 individuals (3,386 women and 2,294 men).



## Shelter/Non Food Items/Camp Coordination and Camp Management

Some 479 IDPs from 3 sites in Bangui under threat of eviction have voluntarily returned to their neighbourhoods of origin, benefitting from UNHCR NFI assistance to do so. Monitoring activities will be carried out in these neighbourhoods by UNHCR and its partners to support the sustainable reintegration of these returnees in their communities. Advocacy is being conducted by the Protection Cluster and the Shelter/NFI/CCCM Cluster for an integrated approach that promotes durable solutions in these communities.

UNHCR and its partner NRC have together rehabilitated emergency shelters in four sites in Bangui, assisting over 3,500 IDPs who were living under very harsh conditions in worn out tents and are being exposed to health risks during the present rainy season.

## 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
- 1 governmental partner the National Refugee Commission (CNR) and 10 partners selected in 2016 to implement UNHCR activities in CAR: ACTED; Afrique, Secours et Assistance; AIRD; Norwegian Refugee Council; Danish Refugee Council; Mercy Corps; Cooperazione Internazionale; International Medical Corps; Lutheran World Foundation; INTERSOS; Vision to Change the World
- 6 national NGOs: Bangui Sans Frontière (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 sectoral 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 | Spain | Sweden | Switzerland | USA | Private donors in Australia, Germany and Sweden**

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