

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC SITUATION

UNHCR REGIONAL UPDATE 66

1 – 31 March 2016

KEY FIGURES

482,201

Central African refugees in Cameroon, Chad, DRC and Congo

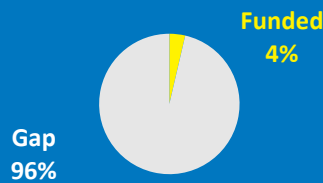
28%

IDPs in CAR living in the capital, Bangui (sites and host families)

FUNDING

USD 243.8 million

required for the situation in 2016



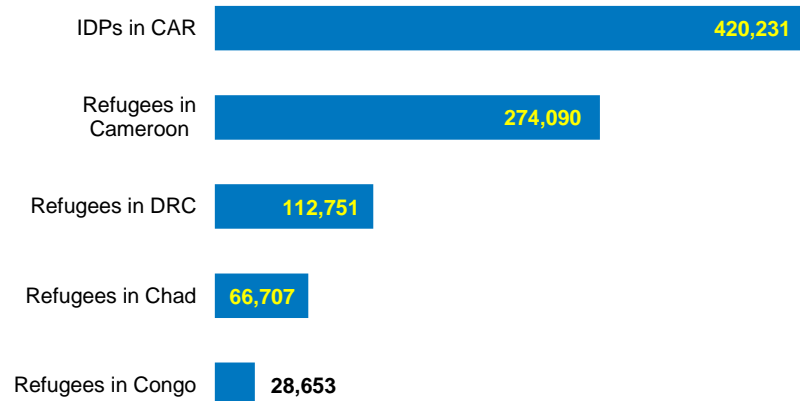
PRIORITIES

- **CAR:** Finalize the normative framework on IDP return in collaboration with UNDP; start the implementation of the return pilot project in Bangui.
- **Cameroon:** Continue biometric registration in the East region; strengthen the WASH response in all refugee sites.
- **Chad:** Pursue advocacy efforts to improve refugees' access to arable land; promote and strengthen refugees' self-sufficiency; continue the search for durable solutions through cross-border dialogue and resettlement programming
- **DRC:** Continue shelter construction; provide anti-malaria drugs in all camps.
- **RoC:** Ensure registration and documentation of all CAR refugees; strengthen assistance for education, including secondary education and

HIGHLIGHTS

- Significant funding shortfalls in UNHCR's operations put refugees and internally displaced populations at risk in the Central African Republic (CAR) and the sub-region;
- In CAR, UNHCR and UNDP identified pilot areas in displaced sites in Bangui to initiate voluntary return assistance;
- UNHCR and its partners conducted a large-scale vaccination campaign in Chad, reaching some 11,000 refugee children;
- In Cameroon, the biometric registration of refugees in Gado was completed and will be conducted in the site of Borgop;
- UNHCR launched the biometric registration of CAR refugees hosted in the Democratic Republic of the Congo;
- UNHCR strengthened the education response in the Republic of the Congo.

902,432 persons of concern



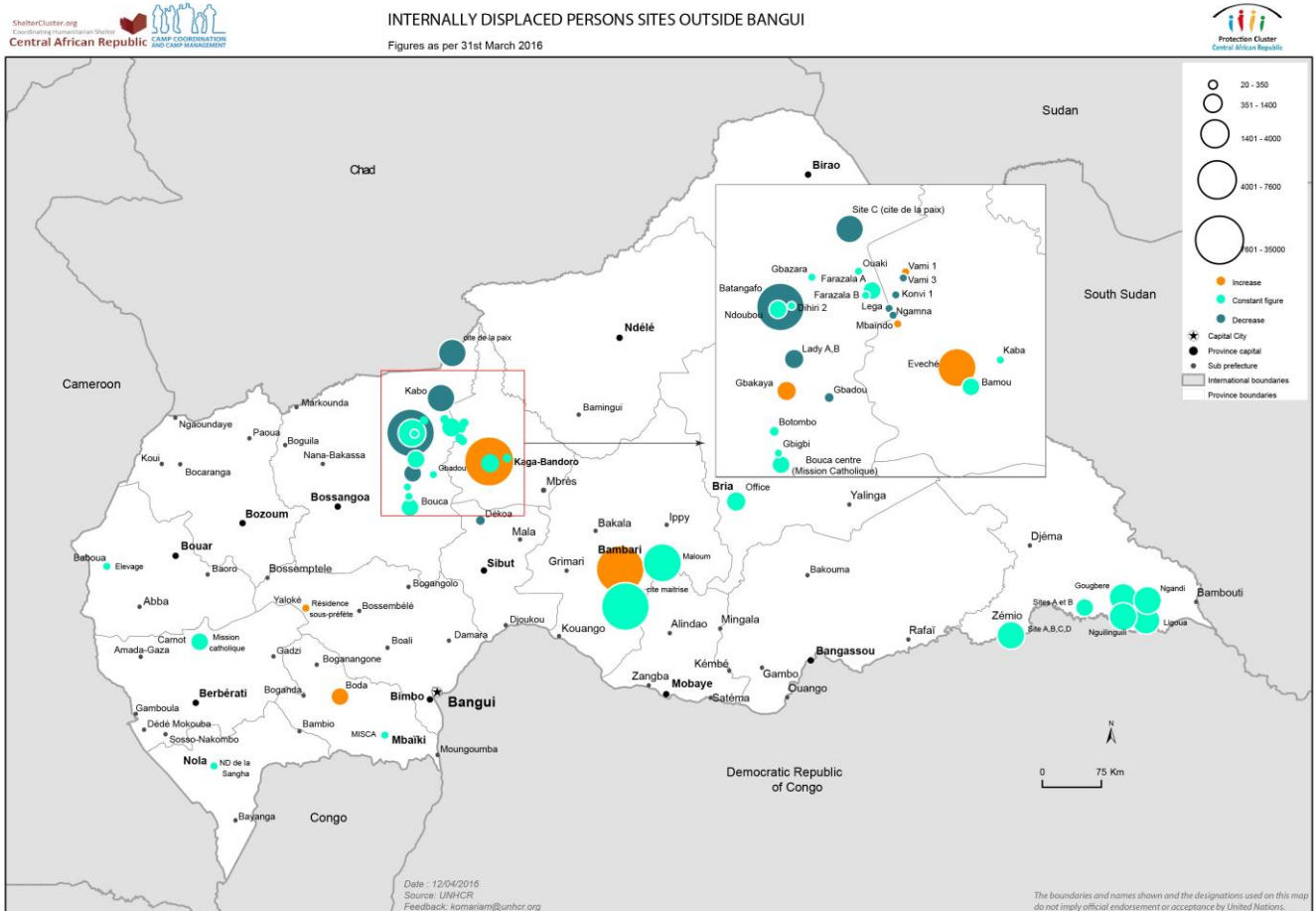
In East Cameroon, refugees finalise the construction of durable shelters in Timangolo site. ©UNHCR/ K. Kalumiya

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Operational Context

Sporadic security incidents continue and the number of internally displaced in CAR decreases –

- The number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) decreased between February and March 2016 from 435,000 to 420,000 people. This reduction is mainly due to return movements observed in specific IDP sites located in the interior (Batangafo, Bouca, Kaga Bandoro), which is greater than the sporadic displacement taking place in the northwestern and eastern part of the country. As of the end of March, there are 97 active IDP sites across CAR, including 18 sites in Bangui. Of the 420,000 recorded IDPs, 44 per cent are sheltered in IDP sites while the rest are reportedly residing with host families. The largest concentration of IDPs is in Ouaka Prefecture, where more than 61,000 people are sheltered in 10 IDP sites while others reside with host families (see map).



- The month of March witnessed two security incidents targeting a public space (a grenade was thrown in a restaurant injuring 12 people including four UNHCR staff) and IDP sites (three people were injured in an armed attack against an IDP site) in Bambari. Transhumance-related violence involving Fulani herdsmen and anti-Balaka armed groups was observed in West and Central CAR, forcing the displacement of local communities westwards towards Kouï and Bocaranga.

– while spontaneous returns continue –

- In 2015 some 21,600 refugee returnees from neighboring countries were registered, and since the beginning of the year, an estimated 420 refugee returns have been reported, mainly in the Sub-Prefectures of Berberati (Mambéré-Kadéï Prefecture), Bouar (Nana-Mambéré Prefecture), Paoua (Ouham-Pendé Prefecture), Ngaoundaye (Ouham-Pendé Prefecture), Kouï (Ouham-Pendé Prefecture) and Moyenne-Sido (Ouham Prefecture). Following successful presidential and legislative elections in CAR, UNHCR noticed an increase in the number of requests for voluntary repatriation of refugees. For the time being, UNHCR does not encourage repatriation to CAR considering the volatile and precarious security situation that prevails in many areas across the country.
- In CAR, as part of various surveys on the intentions of IDP return conducted by UNHCR, the International Organisation for Migration or the Danish Refugee Council, the vast majority of respondents indicated their wish to be able to leave their displacement site, citing access to housing, the return of national security forces, the presence of national administration and functioning social services as their main priorities. Interestingly, while previously security in return areas was one of the main

factors hindering return, respondents now said that a lack of access to markets and the absence of functioning social services are their top priorities. This was followed by their wish for a visible return of national security forces (police, gendarmes and military).

- According to returned IDPs and refugees interviewed during the reporting period, the main reasons for return include: (i) improvement in the security situation in areas of return (due to the presence of international and/or national security forces); (ii) the peaceful electoral process; (iii) the agricultural season mainly in Ouham and Ouham-Pendé Prefectures; (iv) the revitalization of the mining industry, especially in Berberati Sub-Prefecture (Mambéré-Kadéï Prefecture).

– amidst critical funding gaps putting UNHCR's people of concern at risk

- With several large-scale humanitarian crises competing for limited donor funding, and with the CAR crisis having become a protracted situation, UNHCR operations face a challenging funding environment – threatening the delivery of protection and basic services to some 850,000 people of concern across the sub-region. UNHCR operations in CAR and the region still require US\$234.5 million until the end of the year out of US\$243.8 million budgeted. In 2015, the CAR situation was already one of the most underfunded in the African continent with only 26 per cent of resources mobilised.
- This funding situation affects people of concern when they are at their most vulnerable. In CAR, funding gaps allow UNHCR to conduct monitoring activities in only 7 out of the 12 reported hotspots areas across the country. In the Republic of Congo, UNHCR is neither able to cover more than 30 per cent of refugees' needs in non-food items (NFIs), nor able to provide adequate support to income-generating activities. In Cameroon, lack of resources for the CAR refugee programme has left 67 per cent (35,500 out of 53,000) of children out of school. In Chad, key solutions-oriented activities such as livelihood and self-reliance opportunities have not been provided at the scale of refugees' demand (for the new influx of CAR refugees). Furthermore, other humanitarian agencies face similar funding constraints such as the World Food Programme who is forced to reduce food rations not only in Chad but also in DRC and Cameroon. Ultimately, this can lead to an increase in malnutrition rates and can further deteriorate refugees' health status and human development.
- Forced displacement can give rise to a host of protection risks which organizations such as UNHCR seek to address. However, if financial resources are not made available in line with funding requirements, IDP, refugee and host populations face even greater risks. Without sufficient support for both refugees and IDPs alike, forced displacement can, for example, make individuals and their communities more prone to discrimination and exploitation, including sexual and gender-based violence, human smuggling and trafficking. Funding shortfalls increase the risk that displaced people resort to negative coping mechanisms, such as prostitution, reducing the number of meals consumed per day, borrowing money, and removing children from school to help generate additional income.



CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR and UNDP developed a guidance note for the humanitarian community on IDP returns with a set of criteria and checklist to facilitate the return of displaced communities in CAR. The Working Group on Return, led by the Ministry of Social Affairs, will build on this note to formulate a nationwide durable solutions strategy. The note, endorsed by the Humanitarian Country Team, emphasizes the voluntary nature of returns, and the need to accompany return without promoting it for the time being. The reintegration of returned refugees will be part of an integrated approach as IDPs and CAR refugees will mostly return to the same areas.
- As part of the planning process to accommodate refugee returns, UNHCR has identified five main return areas, namely Mambéré-Kadéï, Ouham Pendé, Ouham and Nana-Grébizi Prefectures as well as Bangui, following border monitoring activities carried out in 2014 and 2015 along the border with Chad and Cameroon. In particular, 45 return localities in Mambéré-Kadéï Prefecture and Nana-Mambéré Prefecture have been assessed thus far to implement targeted, community-based assistance. UNHCR, through its NGO partners the Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development and the Lutheran World Federation, started the implementation of two projects for shelter reconstruction, rehabilitation of social services and the provision of core relief items in return areas in Ouham Pendé, Nana-Mambéré and Mambéré-Kadéï.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- In Bangui, nine IDP sites – hosting some 6,100 people – are at risk of eviction. As part of a survey conducted by UNHCR during the month of March on intentions' return, respondents mentioned that they are unable to go back due to housing and security issues as well as a lack of economic opportunities and basic services in their areas of origin. UNHCR will use these findings to advocate among government authorities and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) for the improvement of the security situation in return areas and among the humanitarian and development community to focus interventions on the rehabilitation/reconstruction of houses and basic infrastructure as crucial milestones to ensure a sustainable return. In this regard, UNHCR and UNDP are undertaking preparatory works to implement a pilot return project targeting the nine IDP sites in Bangui.
- In the interior of the country, UNHCR, the World Food Programme and the Danish Refugee Council carried out a return monitoring and camp coordination and camp management (CCCM) mission in the area of Bouca – located at the far east of Bossangoa town (Ouham Prefecture) – in order to assess the situation of IDPs in sites as many of them reportedly returned

to their areas of origin. The mission visited 6 IDP sites on the Bouca-Batangafo road where IDPs from Batangafo confirmed their willingness to return pending security improvements. UNHCR also noticed that some groups of IDPs in these sites returned to their villages on the Dekoa and Bozakon axis thanks to the restoration of suitable security conditions.

CAMEROON

- **Achievements and Impact.** The biometric registration in the site of Gado ended on 25 March through which 21,937 refugees were verified. The exercise is currently being pursued in the site of Borgop. Since the start of this exercise, 37,241 refugees have been registered with the biometric system in Yaoundé, Douala, Gaso and Borgop. During the month, UNHCR also conducted three border protection monitoring missions in the border villages Gbatoua-Godole, de Diel and de Ngolo in Adamaoua region.
- **Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps.** As part of UNHCR's planning process to assess refugees' needs, an Age, Gender, Diversity Mainstreaming (AGDM) exercise was completed on 4 March in the East region where most of CAR refugees are hosted. Following consultations with refugees, it was noted that while refugees in camps and host villages face similar risks and challenges, refugees living in host villages receive reduced or limited assistance when compared to refugees living in camps as a result of the absence of humanitarian actors in those areas. Through the systematic application of an Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) approach in its operation, UNHCR seeks to ensure that all persons of concern enjoy their rights on an equal footing and are able to participate fully in the decisions that affect their lives and the lives of their family members and communities.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

- **Achievements and Impact.** A biometric registration was launched on 21 March in Inke town where some 10,500 Central African refugees are hosted. Thus far, 6,341 refugees have been verified. The biometric registration will also be conducted in Boyabu, Mole and Bili refugee camps in April.

REPUBLIC OF CONGO

- **Achievements and Impact.** UNHCR continued to monitor the arrival of Central African, with an average rate of 10 new arrivals per day. Refugees told UNHCR protection staff that they fled due to continuous attacks and violence perpetrated by armed militias. Furthermore, as part of International Women's Day, UNHCR organized, in partnership with the World Food Programme, the *Agence d'assistance aux rapatriés et réfugiés du Congo* and *Terres sans frontières*, a one-day sensitization workshop in Betou on sexual and gender-based violence, HIV/AIDS and psychosocial support. This was an opportunity for women to share their experiences and express their concerns.



In the Republic of Congo, CAR refugee women and asylum seekers promote equal rights and women's empowerment on the occasion of the International Women's Day Walk in Bétou ©UNHCR

- **Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps.** UNHCR is currently negotiating with the government on the issue of CAR refugee status determination. Some 2,200 CAR asylum seekers are unable to obtain refugee status since the government announced the end of the *prima facie* refugee status for those who arrived after 20 July 2015. At the moment, all those who arrived after this date are not recognized as refugees and are registered by UNHCR as asylum seekers.

Education

CAMEROON

- **Achievements and Impact.** Advocacy efforts were conducted jointly with the NGO partner Catholic Relief Service towards the Regional Delegate of Secondary Education based in Bertoua, in favour of refugee children enrolled in all secondary schools in the East Region. The discussions focused on the reintegration of refugee students who had been excluded from school for non-payment of school fees and the construction of school infrastructure in locations with a high concentration of refugees.

REPUBLIC OF CONGO

- **Achievements and Impact.** Through its partner the *Agence d'assistance aux rapatriés et réfugiés du Congo*, UNHCR and the Primary Education Council of the Betou District facilitated a workshop from 24 to 26 March 2016 to strengthen the teaching skills of 100 teachers – including 40 CAR volunteers – working in both public and private schools attended by CAR refugees. As part of the 2016 academic year, 3,033 CAR refugees – including 1,405 girls – are currently enrolled in primary school in Bétou.



Health

CHAD

- **Achievements and Impact.** A vaccination campaign against poliomyelitis targeting refugee children under five was implemented from 25 to 27 March by UNHCR's partner *Centre de secours en santé internationale*, together with the hospital authorities. In total, some 11,000 children in the camps of Amboko, Gondje, Doholo and Dosseye were vaccinated. As a mean to strengthen the health response, four health centers were constructed in the five refugee camps in Gore and Maro. Both refugee and host community populations have access to these health facilities. In addition, an average of 600 medical consultations are conducted per month.



Food Security and Nutrition

CAMEROON

- **Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps.** During the month, the World Food Programme (WFP) faced serious funding shortfalls, affecting its food assistance programme in the East region. Refugees were informed on the funding difficulties and their consequences for their monthly food ration. In the sites of Borgop, Gado and Ngam, in the Adamawa region, a total of 46,069 refugees (12,638 households) received a 15-day ration (instead of the usual monthly ration). In April, WFP expects to distribute food assistance at planned levels to all refugees except those living in Gado where a cash-based transfer (CBT) initiative will be piloted during the month. This programme will replace the in-kind food distribution for this particular group of refugees.

CHAD

- **Achievements and Impact.** WFP and the Lutheran World Foundation undertook targeted food distribution in the five refugee camps in southern Chad. In Amboko and Doholo camps, food assistance reached 10,548 individuals, representing 98 per cent of the target population. March food distributions continue in April in the three other camps. The current targeted food assistance programme was designed following a Wealth Ranking Assessment carried out in 2015 in the five refugee camps in which four main socio-economic categories were identified (rich; middle; poor and very poor) according to which refugees receive a food basket between 700 and 1,800 kilocalories. For the March distribution cycle, refugees received a food ration of 13 per cent reduction for very poor refugees and 70 per cent reduction for refugees falling under the 'rich' category. As a consequence, refugees' food intake was reduced, varying from 91 per cent of the full ration for very poor refugees to 42 per cent for refugees belonging to the 'rich' category.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

- **Achievements and Impact.** As a way to address malnutrition among Central African refugees, UNHCR's partner the *Association pour le développement économique (ADES)* set-up cooking demonstrations in Buyavu, specifically addressed to children, pregnant and breastfeeding women. The same activity was conducted in Mboti – with participation of children and their caretakers – where a cooking demonstration was prepared with local products.
- **Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps.** WFP has reduced its food rations by 20 percent since December 2015, and plans to maintain this level in the face of a difficult funding outlook. If no new contributions materialize, WFP will have to halt its assistance to nearly 70,000 CAR refugees living in four camps by May 2016. This reduction does not concern the smaller camp of Ango, where food assistance is provided through cash-based transfers.

REPUBLIC OF CONGO

- **Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps.** Malnutrition among CAR refugees remained a serious public health concern in rural areas where WFP was unable to provide the nutritional products because of funding constraints. In Bétou and Moualé, there is a need to increase the number of health staff as the current limited number of healthcare workers is leading to work overload, which may affect the quality of healthcare services.



Shelter, Non-Food Items and Camp Coordination & Camp Management (CCCM)

CAMEROON

- **Achievements and Impact.** In order to improve the living conditions of refugees, UNHCR and its partners have been building durable shelters in the various sites in the East. During the month, a total of 1,073 durable shelters was completed – representing 100 per cent of the target – in Lolo, Mbile and Timangolo with funding from ECHO.

CHAD

- **Achievements and Impact.** UNHCR's partner, *Association pour le développement économique et social* (ADES) carried out rehabilitation works of shelters for persons living with special needs (PSN). In Belom camp, 200 shelters were rehabilitated and households were assisted with construction kits. In Amboko and Doholo camps, 165 shelters were rehabilitated and construction kits were handed over to households to help them build semi-durable shelters.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

- **Achievements and Impact.** While some 1,100 refugee shelters in the camps of Inke, Bili and Boyabu were destroyed by adverse weather conditions that continued during the reporting month, fresh donor contributions allowed the rehabilitation and reconstruction of several hundreds of emergency shelters. Since February, some 870 emergency shelters were completed in the three camps.

REPUBLIC OF CONGO

- **Achievements and Impact.** Through the Congolese Red Cross, UNHCR provided NFI support (mats, buckets, soap, jerry cans and blankets) to improve the detention conditions of the CAR refugees arrested in Bétou and detained at the Impfondo prison for theft, embezzlement charges. During the month, UNHCR provided NFI assistance to 178 refugees (102 families) through its partner *Agence d'assistance pour les rapatriés et les réfugiés au Congo*.
- **Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps.** On 10 and 11 March, heavy rain accompanied by strong winds struck the Betou area and its surroundings, causing considerable damage to the *15 Avril* refugee site. Following a monitoring mission to assess the housing conditions, it appeared that seven family shelters were damaged. Whilst it was also noted that a hundred refugee families who arrived in 2015 were using mats, blankets and mosquito nets in very poor condition – given that last general distribution of NFIs to Central African refugees took place in 2014 – UNHCR has taken the necessary steps for the renewal of these items.



UNHCR staff meet with representatives of the refugee community at Mole camp near the town of Zongo, Sud Ubangi Province, in DRC. These regular meetings are an opportunity to discuss achievements and gaps in humanitarian assistance @UNCHR/F. Salvi



Community Empowerment, Self-Reliance & Peaceful Coexistence

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

- **Achievements and Impact.** The Youth Initiative Fund project was renewed for both refugees living in Mole camp and in out of camp settings. This project intends to enhance the peaceful cohabitation between young Muslim and Christian refugees, with joint targeted activities and discussions involving both religious communities. This project is part of the UNHCR-run "Youth Initiative Fund" piloted in 2013, aiming to address some of the concerns around the lack of programmes and opportunities for youth, by providing young refugees with the opportunity to develop their own projects.

REPUBLIC OF CONGO

- **Achievements and Impact.** In an effort to support refugees in agro-pastoral activities and in light of difficulties they face in accessing land, the municipality of Bétou granted 20 hectares of arable land to refugees hosted in the *15 Avril* site following successful negotiations led by UNHCR. On the Catholic Church's initiative and with UNHCR's support, local authorities also made available to refugees one hectare of land for vegetable crops in total near the *15 Avril* site. UNHCR was able to identify and provide support to 300 CAR households through its partner the *Agence d'assistance pour les rapatriés et les réfugiés au Congo*.
- **Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps.** Refugees involved in gardening activities require capacity building in agricultural production techniques.

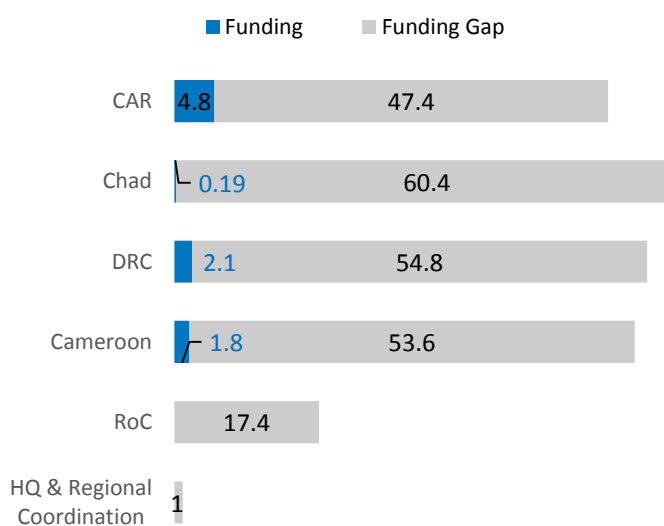
FINANCIAL INFORMATION

UNHCR's total financial requirements for the Central African Republic Situation, involving operations in CAR and neighbouring countries (Cameroon, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the Republic of the Congo) amount to **USD 243.8 million from January to December 2016**, including USD 189.5 million for the response in asylum countries. As at the end of March 2016, **the overall funding gap is USD 234.5 million (94 per cent)**

Donors who have contributed to the situation in 2016 include: **Funding (USD million):**

DRC Pooled Fund
European Union
France
The Holy See
Japan
UN Development Programme
Spain
Switzerland

A total of **USD 9.2 million** has been funded



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