

# Central African Republic Situation

22 February 2021

Over **109,000 persons have fled CAR** due to the ongoing conflict (estimates from host governments as of 16 February 2021), the majority across the southern border to the Democratic Republic of Congo.

To improve refugee access to potable water, sanitation facilities or food of refugees in DRC, UNHCR is rolling out a **plan to relocate approximately 35,000 new arrivals** from border areas to four localities inland in three provinces.

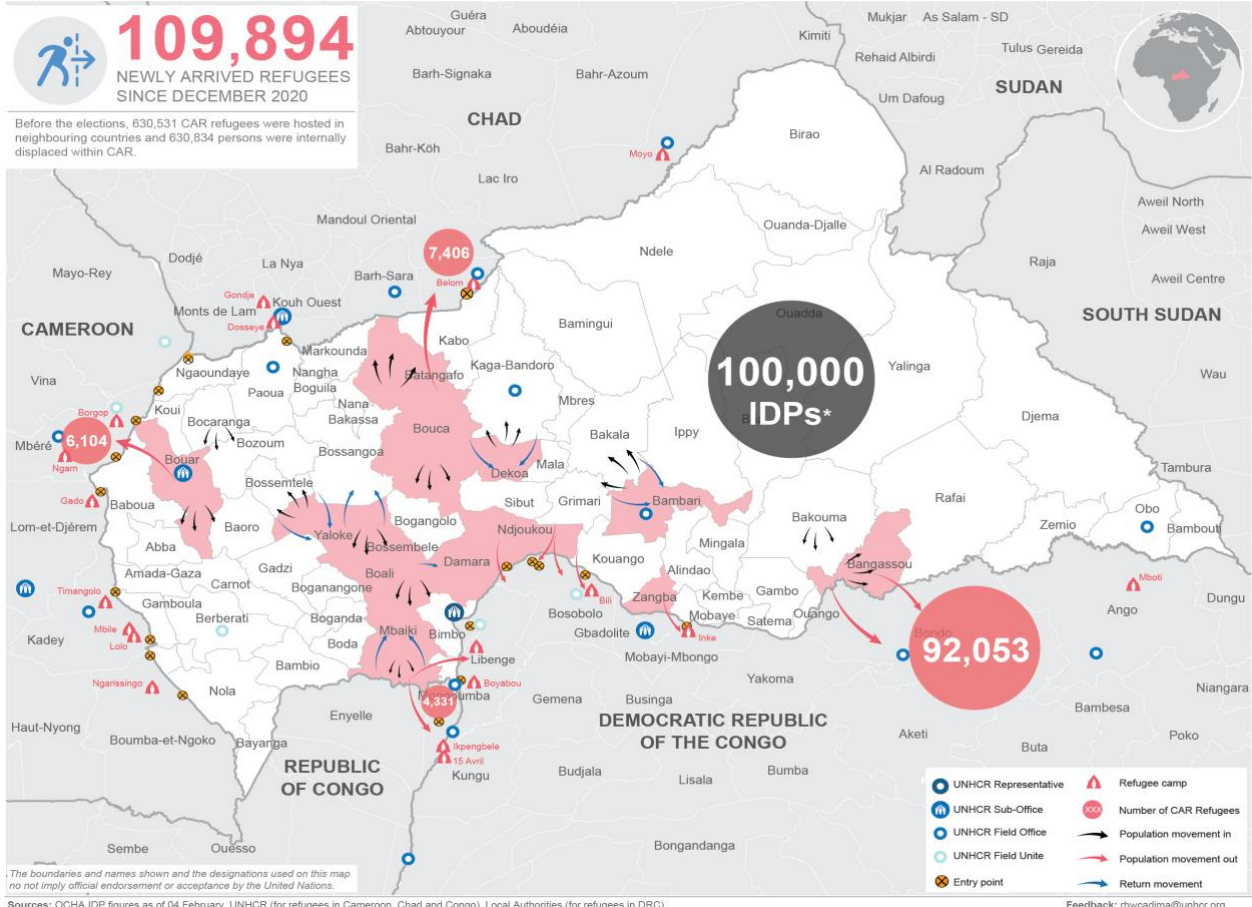
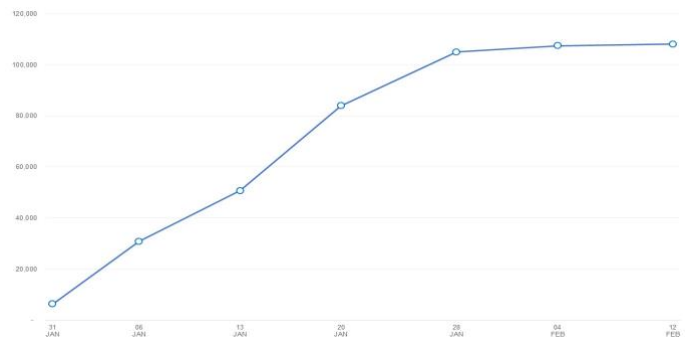
UNHCR identified **Eight COVID-19 cases among new arrivals** and an additional 35 confirmed cases among refugees already in Cameroon, confirming the **reality of the contamination risk** amid this new influx.

## POPULATION OF CONCERN

Host Countries	New Arrivals
Cameroon	6,116*
Chad	7,406*
Congo	4,331*
DRC	92,053**
<b>Total</b>	<b>109,906</b>

\* Data as reported by UNHCR Operations as of 16 February 2021

\*\* Source: Local authorities in DRC as of 04 February 2021



# Operational Context

## Political and security situation in Central African Republic

- The conflict surrounding the 27 December 2020 elections in the Central African Republic (CAR) continues to take a heavy toll on civilians, faced the combined effect of widespread violence and insufficient assistance.
- As of 19 February 2021, local authorities in neighbouring countries reported the arrival of over 109,000 individuals who have fled from the Central African Republic (CAR) due to violence surrounding the 27 December 2020 elections. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), 92,053 persons reportedly sought safety), while 6,116 went to Cameroon, 7,406 to Chad, and 4,331 to the Republic of Congo. 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.
- Despite a decrease in the number of attacks since the first half of January, the security situation remains volatile sparing only few regions and hampering humanitarian access to the affected population. The instability violence persisting across large parts of the country, particularly the west along the Cameroon border, the center and south-east. Reports of grave human rights violations and abuses continue to be received by humanitarian actors within CAR and in the asylum countries, in particular DRC where newly arrived refugees reported severe sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), a longstanding protection issue in CAR.
- While a new convoy of humanitarian and commercial supplies reached Bangui this week, the ongoing insecurity is still causing a major disruption in the main supply road into CAR, delaying the timely delivery of essential aid to affected populations and causing a steady rise in the price of staple foods since December 2020. Adding to the negative socio-economic impact of the COVID-19, this new crisis is further aggravating food insecurity in a country already affected by a high prevalence of acute malnutrition.
- As political tensions remain high, further displacement is expected, and humanitarian needs are likely to grow. In this volatile context, UNHCR and its partners continue to scale up their response to provide emergency assistance to the displaced and other affected populations, while facing a chronic lack of funding for one the most neglected crises in the world.

## Population movements and border monitoring

- While the number of new arrivals reporting by the authorities of Cameroon, Chad, Congo and DRC has stagnated for the past two weeks, UNHCR continues to monitor the borders between CAR and the neighboring countries and works closely with local authorities and communities to identify new arrivals who may have crossed through irregular border points and settled in the border areas and provide them with necessary assistance.
- While scaling up its emergency response in the main hosting areas, UNHCR conducts protection and health screening to identify individuals with specific needs and provide them with adequate assistance. In coordination with national authorities, UNHCR continues its registration activities and issuance of legal and identification documentation, essential for the protection of refugees. UNHCR also sustains its prevention efforts to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 contamination and conducts sensitization activities with the new arrivals.
- The situation remains particularly challenging in DRC, where the refugees live in remote areas and are in urgent need of shelter, food, and better access to water, health and adequate sanitation to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other diseases.
- 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

- Since the beginning of this crisis, UNHCR has stepped up its emergency response in CAR and the main hosting areas. To structure the scale up of its emergency response and preparedness activities, UNHCR declared, on 21 January 2021, a Level 2 emergency for its Operation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and a Level 1 emergency for its Operations in the Central African Republic, Cameroon, Chad and in the Republic of Congo.

## Central African Republic

- In CAR, UNHCR keeps monitoring the protection situation to identify persons with specific needs are provided with the necessary assistance, particularly female-headed households and separated or unaccompanied children.
- As ongoing violence and insecurity continues to hamper humanitarian access and assistance to internally displaced populations, UNHCR deployed additional staff in Bangassou and in Batangafo to strengthen its response capacity in areas of protection, SGBV, CCCM and supply.
- Due to the ongoing insecurity and disruptions in supply lines, UNHCR's 18,650 prepositioned NFI kits are still blocked in Cameroon due to the ongoing insecurity around the supply route into CAR. While addressing this major logistical challenge, UNHCR is supporting its partner IFRC in the implementation of its shelter and NFI interventions in four major IDP informal settlements in Bangui and PARET deployed as CCCM partner to the new IDP site of PK22 in the vicinity of Bangui.
- Addressing the rise in SGBV incidents is a priority for UNHCR. Working with community relays and key informants in affected areas, an alert mechanism for SGBV incidents has been established as well as a "green line" for remote psychosocial support for survivors of SGBV. These innovative measures are part of UNHCR's effort to strengthen community structures to ensure a solid community-based protection response. When access to affected population is possible, UNHCR provides direct assistance including individual counseling session, medical referrals, mental health, and psychosocial support, as well as cash assistance to survivors of SGBV (to cover medical expenses and other related costs).
- While scaling its presence with the deployment of additional staff to enhance the protection monitoring and response in the most affected areas and strengthen the supply chain management, UNHCR works closely with OCHA, the government and other humanitarian agencies to conduct joint assessments in Bangui and across the country in order to facilitate a coordinated emergency response. UNHCR also participates actively in the key coordination fora 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 16 February 2021, UNHCR has biometrically registered 30,335 newly arrived Central African refugees in Nord Ubangi, Sud Ubangi and Bas Uele Provinces. Joint protection teams continue to monitor border localities hosting new arrivals, with reports indicating persistent poor living conditions in these locations, including little or no access to potable water, sanitation facilities or food. UNHCR is rolling out a plan to relocate approximately 35,000 new arrivals from border areas to four localities in three provinces, beginning with Modale, in Yakoma, Nord Ubangi Province and Goya in Ndu, Bas Uele Province. Both settlements will initially accommodate 10,000 individuals each. The hosting localities will be developed with improvements to health, education, water, and sanitation facilities including rehabilitation work on access roads.
- Approximately 48 out of 74 identified Central African babies born on Congolese territory have received birth certificates. The birth certificates will prevent statelessness and facilitate protection and assistance to both refugee children and their families. 1,694 people, including separated and unaccompanied children, women at risk, people with disabilities and serious medical conditions have been identified during registration at refugee-hosting sites in Ndu and Yakoma, Bas Uele and Nord Ubangi Provinces.

- A total of 48 cases of GBV have been reported in Ndu, while more generally, in this context of heightened need and vulnerability, women are reportedly resorting to negative coping mechanisms such as survival sex. UNHCR in partnership with the Government is supporting awareness-raising about international protection, humanitarian principles and prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse with local authorities in Ndu and Yakoma. Over the past week a local partner, supported by UNHCR, has reached 1,000 people in Ndu through these sessions.
- UNHCR participated in a joint health evaluation, with a team comprising UN and NGO partners as well as the Provincial Health Division. The team reported high risk of a measles epidemic in the refugee hosting sites around Yakoma, Mobayi-Mbongo and Wasolo health zones in Nord Ubangi Province. Suspected measles cases have already been reported among the host communities. UNHCR is recommending an urgent vaccination drive as measles vaccination coverage among refugee children under five is estimated to be less than 30 percent.
- UNHCR has distributed core relief items (CRIs) including blankets, sleeping mats, kitchen sets and mosquito nets to 1,214 extremely vulnerable households in Nord Ubangi, Sud Ubangi and Bas Uele Provinces in the first two weeks of February. UNHCR also distributed blankets and mosquito nets to a small number of lactating mothers who recently gave birth in Saguila, Sud Ubangi Province, without access to healthcare facilities.



A family of Central African refugees are biometrically registered by UNHCR staff in the village of Ndu, Bas Uele Province, Democratic Republic of the Congo. ©UNHCR/ Fabien Faivre

## Cameroon

- As of 22 February, a total of 6,116 new CAR refugees have crossed into Cameroon, mostly in the Garoua Boulai area (4,929 new arrivals) and further south in the Batouri region (643 individuals). In collaboration with national authorities, UNHCR continues to monitor the border and maintains a quick alert system to identify and reach new arrivals crossing through irregular border points. These movements suggest that the new arrival figures in Cameroon are likely higher than the currently reported. UNHCR is planning a up mobile registration exercise in the villages of the border areas to identify and register refugees settled within these communities.



- Preventive measures to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 contamination are implemented by UNHCR. So far, health screenings conducted have allowed to identify 10 COVID-19 cases among new arrivals and an additional 35 confirmed cases among refugees already in Cameroon, confirming the reality of the contamination risk. All have been quarantined at the Garoua Boulai district hospital while UNHCR teams assisting them and their families. The health infrastructure in the border areas has limited capacity and increased support is urgently required to address the needs.
- Protection screenings are also ongoing in hosting areas to allow for the identification of those with specific needs who are prioritized for assistance. So far, 100 persons with specific needs have been identified, including 74 vulnerable women, among whom 8 SGBV survivors who have been directly assisted medical assistance and psychosocial support.
- As of 22 February, 5,088 of the new arrivals have been biometrically registered and enrolled in UNHCR's PRIMES database. A total of 4,469 refugees were registered in the Garoua Boulai region and over 619 in the Batouri region. In addition to their registration, 3,934 refugees received protection documents, including 1,863 Family Composition Attestations (CFAs) and 2,071 refugee Identification Cards.
- The transfer of new arrivals from border villages to the Gado settlement continues. As of 18 February, a total of 1,227 individuals have been transferred to this site where they were provided with one emergency shelter per household as well as food and NFIs. A total of 300 emergency shelters have been built and 85 more shelters have been rehabilitated to welcome newcomers. As the Gado camp is reaching full capacity, the local authorities of Garoua Boulai granted an area next to Gado site of about 10 hectares to accommodate for the new arrival. Development work, on the first 06 hectares (clearing, cutting, pruning of trees, light earthworks) to establish emergency shelters and other housing facilities ( latrines, showers, water points, distribution shed, children's playground, garbage pits, washing areas etc.).
- The UNHCR and its partners (WFP, UNICEF, UNFPA) are also building and rehabilitating water and sanitation infrastructures. As of 18 February, 40 new communal latrines and showers and 20 are under construction. A new fountain terminal of a 10,000 litres capacity has been built to serve a provisional drinking water distribution system. The construction of four additional drinking water points and 6 washing areas for laundry is underway. In parallel to these improvements, the distribution of NFIs and dignity kits and food assistance is ongoing, but the humanitarian needs remain high among both newly arrived and the other refugees and their hosts.
- While scaling up its response focusing on 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 and coherent response.

## Chad

- As of 12 February, 7,406 new CAR refugees arrived in Chad and have been registered by UNHCR. In coordination with local authorities, UNHCR continues to monitor the border to ensure new arrivals are identified and assisted.
- A total of 1,685 people with specific protection needs have been identified (23% of the new arrivals), including breastfeeding women, women at risk of other SGBV, single-parent families, unaccompanied children, and elderlies. Efforts are ongoing to identify foster families for the 109 Unaccompanied or Separated Children were registered since 26 December.
- In addition to the ongoing prevention measures to mitigate the risk of Covid19 infection, UNHCR's health partner CSSI conducts medical screening and consultations through its mobile clinic at the various border crossing points. Dedicated psychosocial and medical support is also provided to survivors of SGBV and PEP KITs are available for urgent GBV response, with UNFPA support. The main pathologies detected are malaria, respiratory infections and malnutrition. Stockout of food supplement for moderate acute malnutrition and HIV prevention treatments remain a big challenge. In addition, one ambulance is no longer sufficient to adequately monitor all the hosting sites. A second ambulance is needed to cover the needs of new arrivals without reducing the service to the other refugees.

- UNHCR continues to assist new arrivals in border villages while arrangements are being made for more durable shelters. So far, As of 15 Feb, 3,137 new arrivals were provided with NFI kits (including blankets, mats, Jerry cans, kitchen kits, mosquito nets) and 3,681 are receiving food rations with the support of WFP.



*Food distribution organized by WFP for newly arrived refugees in the border village of Ndouba-soh, in Southern Chad. ©UNHCR/ Ndormadingar Benaibey*

- Transfers continue to the Doholo camp where emergency shelters and basic infrastructures are being built to accommodate the new arrivals. In the past week, 965 refugees from the border village of Bekán, Bekoninga and Komba joined the camp bringing to 3,137 the total number of people transferred from the border villages to Goré. To date, over 1,000 new shelters (out of 1200 planned) and 140 community latrines (out of the 300 planned) were built in the camp and a total of an NFI kit including mats, jerry cans, kitchen kits, seals and blankets, mosquitos, soaps was provided to each household transferred to Doholo camp. In view of additional transfers, the local authorities have granted two hectares of land for the construction of new shelters.
- An assessment made by UNHCR partner, ADES in the refugee host villages has revealed a lack of boreholes and latrines at almost all entry points. In response, UNHCR and its partners are planning to support host communities welcoming new arrivals with boreholes and latrines to improve the health and hygiene conditions of the populations.
- Children represent 64% of the new refugee population. Among those already transferred to Doholo camp, there are 993 school-age children, out of whom 517 (52%) are girls. Advocacy is ongoing for their integration in the national education system.
- UNHCR continues to coordinate closely with the local authorities, the CNARR, WFP and other partners to respond to this situation.

## Republic of Congo (RoC)

- UNHCR is coordinating humanitarian assistance to refugees and asylum-seekers in the Likouala Department, with UN partners and NGOs, as well as government partners including CNAR, Ministry of Social Affairs, the Immigration and Police Services.
- In close collaboration with government, UNHCR continues to conduct border and protection monitoring, as the number of new asylum-seekers increases. On 13 February 1,019 Central African refugees were reported to have arrived in Likouala Department. UNHCR also continues to support its government partner in conducting emergency registration of new arrivals, with a total of 4,331 individuals from 1,599 households so far recorded.
- Monitoring missions carried out in Kpakaya have indicated inadequate water supply to serve the increasing number of new arrivals. To address this gap, on 11 February UNHCR and partners installed water tanks of up to 3,000 litres in Kpakaya to ensure increased access to potable water for refugees and hosting communities. UNHCR also provided additional assistance in Ndongo-Missa, where 153 refugees identified as especially vulnerable received CRIs, while 40 women and girls of childbearing age received materials to support their hygiene needs.



*UNHCR staff provide bracelets for emergency registration to newly arriving Central African refugees in Ndongo-missa, Republic of the Congo. © UNHCR/Marc Foukou*

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