

CAR SITUATION

UNHCR CAR UPDATE

DECEMBER 2016 HIGHLIGHTS

KEY FIGURES

411,785 IDPs in CAR of whom **142,235** are in sites

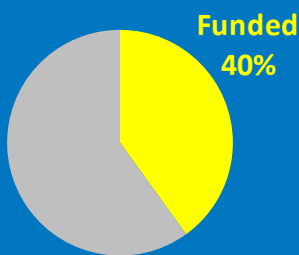
1,028 South Sudanese refugees have been relocated in convoys from Bambouti to Obo.

34,351 Central African refugees returned to CAR during 2016.

FUNDING

USD 57.9 million

Requested for the situation



PRIORITIES

- Ensure the effective delivery of protection monitoring in areas of recent displacement
- Complete the biometric verification exercise for refugees in CAR
- Support the integration of Congolese refugees in Zemio

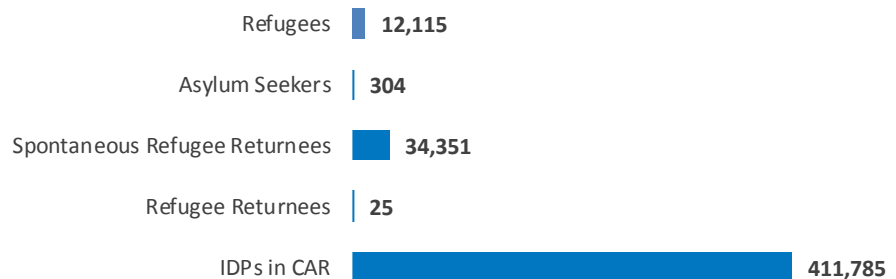


Refugees load their belongings onto trucks ahead of the journey to Obo. UNHCR/Alexander Lewis/13 December 2016, Bambouti

- The return process for IDPs at the M'Poko International Airport site began on 14 December following an announcement by President Touadera.
- The Representative of UNHCR in CAR conducted a mission to Obo and Bambouti to support the relocation of South Sudanese refugees.
- The biometric verification of refugees in Bangui is complete. The process will now move to Obo and Zemio.

Population of concern

A total of **458,580** people of concern.



RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Security

General: Following several months of deteriorating security, December saw the continuation of clashes across the east of the country as rival armed groups sought to entrench their positions. At the same time, a rise in criminality in western zones caused increasing panic amongst civilians.

Bangui: In Bangui, although the month of December was largely calmer than the preceding months, the PK5 neighbourhood continued to suffer armed incidents as the month wore on, most of which were attributed to a local criminal group led by a character under the alias 'Big Man'. Earlier in the month, on 6 December, a UN volunteer was attacked and robbed in the Combattant neighbourhood of Bangui.

Bambari: December began at a moment of high tension for Bambari. A stand-off between the UPC and anti-Balaka elements had driven the town's population into panic, and UNHCR had withdrawn from the office to stay temporarily at the MINUSCA base. As the month progressed, it was marked by the emergence of a new coalition between armed groups operating in Ouaka and Haute-Kotto. The FPRC and the MPC, the former an ex-Seleka group and the latter an anti-Balaka group, formed an alliance against the Peuhl-dominated UPC. This followed widespread outbreaks of violence during November in the same prefectures between the FPRC and UPC. Confrontations continued throughout the month in Ippy, Bakala, and Kouango, with 1,300 people fleeing in the direction of Grimari.

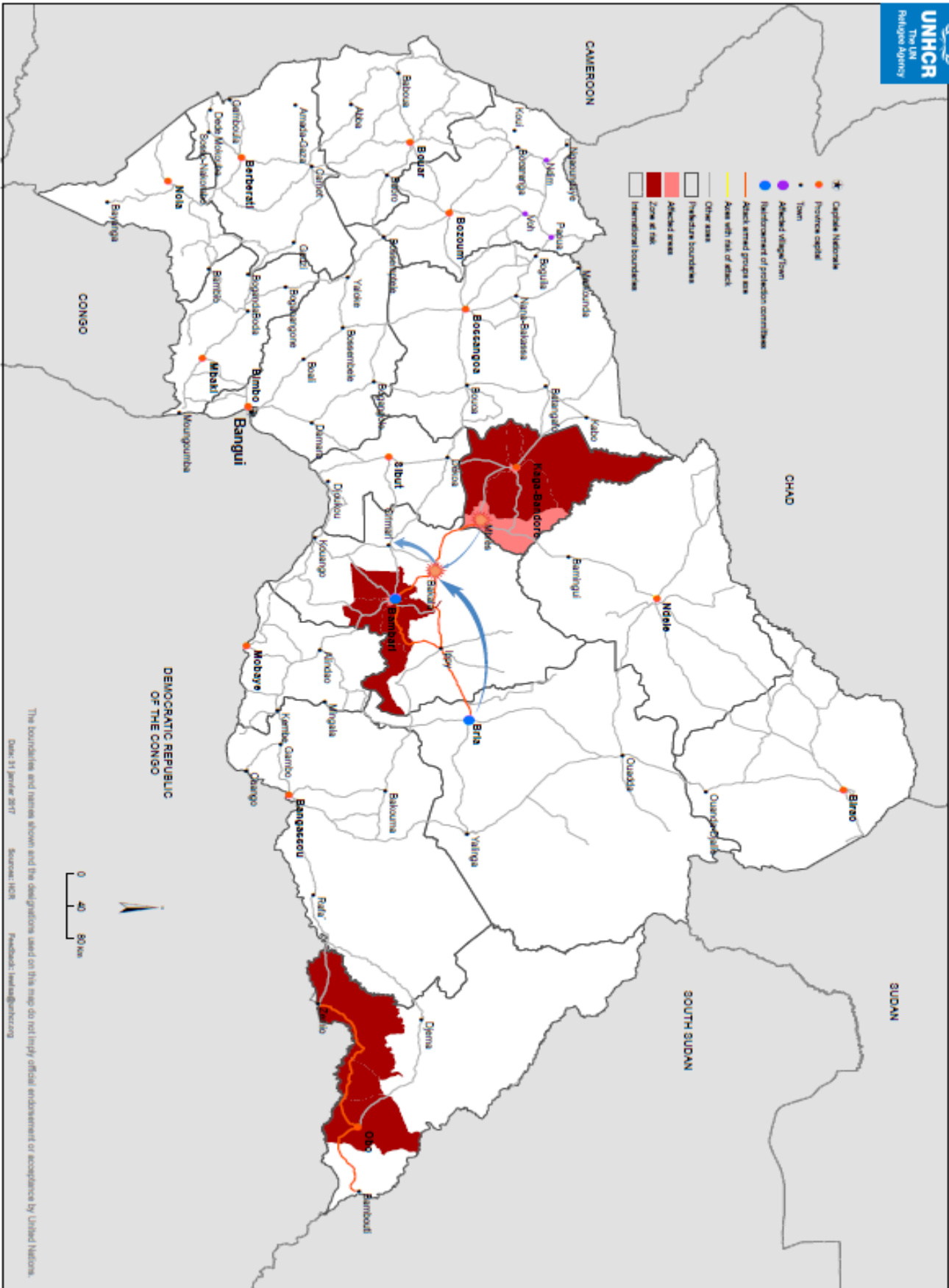
Kaga-Bandoro: On 7 December, a UN community worker was briefly held by ex-Seleka elements following the fatal shooting of a Muslim man in the town one day earlier. The individual was released after questioning. The town of Mbres was the site of an exchange of fire between the FPRC/MPC coalition and the UPC on 16 December. Fatalities were suffered on both sides, though final numbers remain unconfirmed.

Obo: On 16 December, a local self-defence group in Obo fired warning shots after the arrival of armed persons who had allegedly pursued a young man living in the Arab quartier of the town. One individual was killed by a stray bullet. MINUSCA and UPDF forces stepped in to calm the situation, and normal activities resumed the following day.

Paoua: On 3 December, a humanitarian mission undertaken by DRC was attacked by armed criminals in the village of Voh, some 26km outside of the town of Paoua. All members of the mission team were robbed of their possessions. The following day, a large armed robbery was carried out in the centre of Paoua, in which a shop and numerous kiosks were raided, as well as a number of motorbikes stolen. The incident provoked fear amongst the local population, and it was only several days later that life in the town began to return to normal. Armed groups made their presence felt throughout Ouham Pende in December, with twenty armed, uniformed, ex-Seleka elements attacking the village of Pende on 7 December, just one day after thirty members of the 3R group entered the town of Ndim, causing most of the population to flee into the bush.



Hotspots in the Central African Republic, as of December 2016



Operations

In December, UNHCR completed the biometric verification refugees living in Bangui. A total of 1,611 refugees were registered, of which 776 were women, and 835 were men. In addition, some 304 asylum seekers (152 men and 152 women). Documentation in the form of refugee identity cards was provided to all participants over the age of 12. These figures indicate that 81% of the Bangui urban refugee population attended the biometric verification. The exercise will move to Obo and Zemio in January, prior to getting underway in Bambari the following month, security permitting.

Protection

Sexual and gender based violence

The deterioration of security in the east severely hampered the response to incidents of SGBV. Counselling centres in Bambari and Kouango remained closed throughout the month, and planned SGBV working group meetings could not go ahead due to the temporary relocation of much of the humanitarian community to Bangui.

Meanwhile, in Lobaye Prefecture, counselling centres for SGBV survivors, one in Boda which had been open for one month, and the other in M'Baïki open since July, reported their assistance figures for 2016. The centres recorded 15 cases of physical assaults, two sexual assaults on women, one forced marriage, eight cases of rape, four cases of psychological violence, and seven cases of denial of resources concerning both men and women. In the neighbouring prefecture of Ombella M'Poko only the area of Begoa was covered. There, 39 cases were reported during the second half of 2016: 27 cases of physical assault, one case of sexual assault, five cases of rape, three cases of psychological violence and three cases of the denial of resources. However, there is an urgent need to expand SGBV prevention and response services beyond these limited axes.

Internally Displaced Persons

Overall, the number of people displaced in CAR dropped by over 22,000 during December; a reduction almost entirely attributable to large returns from IDP sites in and around the capital.

The situation in the east of the country continued to drive large population movements in December. Following reports of significant displacement in Grimari due to armed clashes in Bakala that began on 12 December, the humanitarian community of Bambari participated in a multi-sectoral mission to assess and provide technical support for registration. In total, 514 displaced households were recorded by the Red Cross and the local authorities. The majority of displaced persons were found to be staying with host families.

The situation in Bria remained tense throughout the month. Between 17 and 20 December, reports surfaced of attacks on several of the main axes emanating from the town, including the roads to Yalinga and to Irrabanda. Displaced families remained mostly in two sites: 2,664 individuals (549 households) in the PK3 area of Bria, and a further 1,056 individuals (184 households) in Katekondji. Despite significant challenges in maintaining access to the main supply route from Bambari, the humanitarian community managed to mount a comprehensive multisectoral response, with a focus on revitalising community committees.

More broadly, although the number of displaced people in Ouaka Prefecture remained at around 64,000 for most of the month, the number in Bambari dropped. This was due to the return of 4,635 individuals from NDV, Aviation, and PK8 sites.

Refugees

The relocation exercise of South Sudanese refugees from Bambouti to Obo concluded on 27 December. The final age and gender breakdown of the refugees in the nine convoys that were organised between 22 October and 27 December is as follows:

Age	Over 18	5 to 17	Under 5	TOTAL
Male	286	122	121	529
Female	305	88	106	499
TOTAL	591	210	227	1,028

A number of key recommendations were made in order to strengthen the response to any future influx in the area. These include: an early warning system using high frequency radios or satellite telephones to be stationed in Bambouti; sensitisation for the Central African Armed Forces (FACA); pre-identification of a transportation truck to transfer the baggage and belongings of refugees, and the provision of communal tents in Bambouti to serve as temporary shelter for any new arrivals prior to their departure to Obo.

On 12 December, UNHCR Representative in CAR, Kouassi Lazare Etien, conducted a joint mission with Valerie Yamande, Secretary General of the National Refugee Commission (CNR) to Obo, Bambouti, and Zemio, to meet with refugees, the authorities and partners on the ground. The mission listened to the refugees concerns and explained to them the benefits in moving from Bambouti to Obo. The remoteness of Bambouti was immediately apparent by the lack of any serviceable roads to reach the site (later on in the month, the breakdown of one vehicle accompanying the convoy 60km from Obo took several days to resolve and required a repair mission). Those refugees still in Bambouti reaffirmed their agreement to relocate to Obo, agreeing that there would be significant benefits in terms of security and ease of assistance. In Obo, a delegation of refugee community leaders expressed their gratitude for the assistance already provided in terms of shelter. Other forms of assistance such as vocational trainings will be considered once the numbers in the camp at Obo have increased and the population has stabilised. Partners have been providing sensitisation trainings on basic day-to-day activities such as how to safely light a fire and how to responsibly make use of the available resources. In Obo, as well as in Zemio, UNHCR will continue to pursue an integrated approach to assistance that provides support for existing local services to be enjoyed by both refugees and the host population alike. This will avoid any duplication of services, focusing instead on strengthening the infrastructure that is already in place, such as through the equipping and developing of local hospitals and schools. In all locations visited, the local authorities expressed their continuing support for the refugees.

Durable Solutions and Reintegration

In December, UNHCR supported the return of 191 households from the sites Emmanuel, Maison Micheline and Saint Antoine de Padoue in Bangui. Returns began on 6 December, with 121 individuals leaving Maison Micheline and 227 leaving the site of Saint Antoine de Padoue. Those departing from the two sites received assistance in the form of cash-based interventions at a rate of XAF 48,000 per household. On 16 December, 156 people left the Emmanuel site to return to the districts. Having expressed a preference for physical assistance rather than cash-based interventions, this population was assisted directly with NFIs.

As of the end of December, some 13 sites in Bangui and Bimbo were empty and had been closed: Adventist School Complex; Votongbo 2; Lazarist Fathers; Djongo; San Marco de Bimbo Grand Séminaire; Four Square; MESME; Don Bosco, Saint Charles Luanga; Saint Antoine de Padoue; Saint Sauveur; Maison Micheline, and Emmanuel. Two sites have now been partially emptied: Evangelical Lutheran Church, and Padre Pio.

In addition, the populations of the Church of Our Lady of Fatima, Mission Carmel and Fateb sites have all expressed an intention to return. For the sites of Bethanie, Saint Joseph Moukassa and Capucins, awareness and sensitisation sessions will be organised in January 2017.

On 14 December, the Government of the Central African Republic announced the beginning of a return programme for the population of the M'Poko International Airport IDP site. This exercise was undertaken with the technical support of UNHCR. As of December 31, some 2,071 households (6,922 individuals) people had already left the site, benefitting from a government cash distribution of 50,000 XAF per household. The site was divided into 13 zones and returns were facilitated sequentially. The 254 households living in zone 1; 249 households in zone 10; 626 households in zone 11; 617 households in zone 2, and 325 households in zone 7 returned within the first two weeks of the beginning of the operation. Complex cases were being processed in Zones 11 and 2, whilst departures were completed in Zones 1 and 10. Throughout the first 16 days of operation, a daily average of 129 households (432 individuals) departed the site.



Shelter/Non Food Items/Camp Coordination and Camp Management

During 2016, UNHCR provided full NFI kits to some 8,279 households (29,684 individuals) as well as specific items to 4,209 households (15,344 individuals). UNHCR continued to provide emergency basic shelter assistance to returnees to help them through the initial period following their arrival. Such assistance was provided in the form of plastic sheeting to 3,644 households (13,681 individuals).

UNHCR's 2016 permanent shelter projects concluded at the end of December, with a total of 222 shelters completed in Nana Mambere, 137 in Mambere Kadei, and 285 shelters in addition to 9 public buildings in Ouham Pende.

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 Federation; INTERSOS; Vision to Change the World
- 6 national NGOs: Bangui Sans Frontière (BSF); Idéal; Yamacuir; JUPEDDEC; 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: **Belgium | Denmark | France | Germany | Japan | Spain | Sweden | Switzerland | USA | Private donors in Australia, Germany and Sweden**

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