

# AD HOC UPDATE #11: New Influx of Refugees from the Central African Republic to the Democratic Republic of Congo

07 May 2021

## Highlights

- As of 04 May 2021, UNHCR and the National Commission for Refugees (CNR) have registered a total of 60,314 newly arrived refugees from the Central African Republic (16,666 households) in North Ubangi South Ubangi, Bas Uele provinces and in the capital Kinshasa.
- On 21 April, UNHCR High Commissioner Filippo Grandi went on mission to Modale settlement, in North Ubangi Province, where he received a convoy of 108 Central Africa refugees relocated from Yakoma.
- The Director of "Education cannot wait", Yasmine Sherif, joined the High Commissioner in his visit to Modale village. There she announced ECW will provide UNHCR with emergency funding for education for refugees from CAR amounting to \$2 million USD.
- Between 24 March and 30 April, over 26,000 refugees from the Central African Republic and host community members benefited from emergency cash assistance in North Ubangi and Bas Uele provinces.



High Commissioner, Filippo Grandi talks with CAR refugees newly relocated to Modale, North Ubangi Province  
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## L2 Emergency Declaration

On 21 January, a Level 2 emergency has been declared for the UNHCR Operation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This decision is designed to scale up UNHCR operations' preparedness and response activities in addressing the protection needs of refugees and other populations affected by the new crisis.

## I- SITUATION

### Elections

On 30 March 2021, Faustin-Archange Touadera was sworn in for a second five-years term as President of the Central African Republic (CAR). Touadera's appointment has been contested by his main opponents and the security situation in the country remains tense and characterized by sporadic violence which started with the presidential elections last December 2020. Several armed groups, most of them signatories of the February 2019 peace agreement, called off a ceasefire and merged into the Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC), resuming military operations against the government. On 14 March, a second round of elections took place across the country without major disruptions and saw 70 members of Parliament elected.

### Security situation

As of April 2021, the security situation in the country remains unchanged. The state of emergency which was declared by authorities on 21 January, has been extended to August 2021 and a night curfew between 6pm and 5am has resumed after the elections. As the CAR armed forces continue to carry out counter-insurgency operations together with their allies, insecurity and instability within the country persist, but the situation has not deteriorated further in the past month. Until recently, many families have fled their homes, with many seeking refuge in neighbouring countries, most notably in DRC, in spontaneous sites situated along the banks of the Ubangi river.

The newly displaced population reported human rights violations against civilians and looting by armed groups in various villages in CAR. Most of the recently arrived refugees have remained very close to the borders. They are

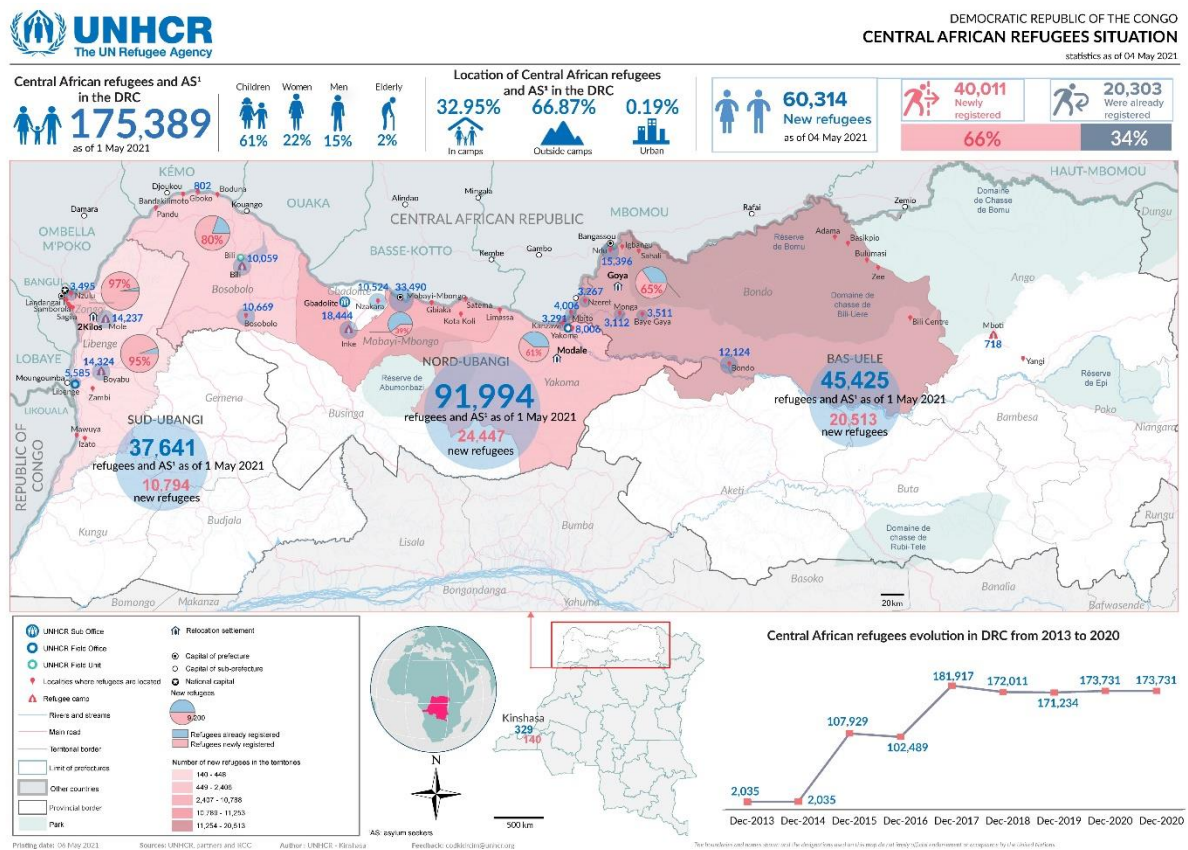
exposed to the risks of further attacks and rights violations by armed groups. UNHCR is working with Congolese authorities to relocate them to villages meeting the minimum standards of security. The majority of them are women and children, while there are also many persons with special needs, such as elderly persons at risk, persons with disabilities and survivors of SGBV.

Over the past months, UNHCR and the National Commission for Refugees (CNR) have set up joint monitoring teams at the border in the three provinces affected by the influx to follow the situation.

### Consequences on the voluntary repatriation operation

Insecurity in CAR has severely affected the voluntary repatriation operation, relaunched in November 2020 after the COVID-19 pandemic had forced border closures. More than 17,000 refugees currently living at Mole and Boyabu camps in South Ubangi Province had expressed their intention to return home. However, several areas previously deemed safe to receive returnees are now again in the grip of insecurity. It should be noted that some of the recent arrivals from the outskirts of Bangui are possibly refugees who had returned during the voluntary repatriations from Mole and Boyabu camps in South Ubangi province, between 2019 and 2020. UNHCR is closely monitoring the evolution of the situation in the Central African Republic, to assess the security conditions and the feasibility of resuming voluntary repatriation operations in the future.

**Figure 1: Entry points of newly arrived families from the Central African Republic**



## II- STATISTICS

According to local authorities, **92,053 individuals from the Central African Republic** have arrived in the DRC since December 2020 (this estimated figure is yet to be verified). This includes an estimated 46,659 individuals in Bas Uele Province, 35,331 in North Ubangi Province and 10,063 in South Ubangi province according to local authorities. Most of the new arrivals have stayed close to the borders in some 40 villages along the banks of the river separating the Central African Republic from the DRC.

Biometric registration of refugees is ongoing in several locations along the border. As of 04 May 2021, 60,314 newly arrived CAR refugees (16,666 households) have been registered by UNHCR and the CNR in North Ubangi, South Ubangi, Bas Uele provinces and in the capital, Kinshasa. The newly arrived refugees are distributed across

three provinces as follows: 21 097 individuals in Bas Uele (Ndu, Yele, Bangalo, Ibangu, Yangi, Sahali, Bili Centre, Basikpio, Adama, Bulumasi, Zee), 28,283 individuals in North Ubangi (Yakoma, Limasa, Satema, Kota Koli, Bassapekambo, Nganza, Gomba Lego, Nzakara, Pandu, Bandakilimoto), 10,794 in South Ubangi (Sagila, Mbay, Vigilant, Nzomboto, Samborola, Congo rivièrè, Nzulu, Libenge, Mawuya, Zambi, Izato) as well as 140 in Kinshasa. 63% of these individuals are new refugees, whilst 37% of them are people who had previously been registered in the UNHCR database.

### III- NEEDS

**The greatest needs of the new arrivals regard food, shelter, health care, documentation, access to drinking water, education, core relief items, livelihoods and sanitation to prevent the spread of the coronavirus and epidemic diseases.**

- Strong winds and torrential rains have destroyed a number of makeshift shelters in new refugee hosting locations in Congo Rive, Sambolola and Sagila (South Ubangi), where UNHCR recently carried out biometric registration. UNHCR and partners are currently assessing the extent of the damage. Shelter assistance and core relief items are urgently needed to ensure the protection of the affected population.
- More resources are needed to continue the relocation of newly arrived refugees to Modale village, and to two other sites in Bili and Zongo which have been identified in North and South Ubangi provinces as possible relocation sites. These relocation settlements granted by local authorities will enable UNHCR to move refugees away from border areas where they are susceptible to risks of attacks or forced recruitment by armed groups from CAR.
- More funds are needed to continue emergency cash distributions and core relief items (CRIs) to newly arrived refugees in North Ubangi, South Ubangi and Bas Uele provinces, to reduce their exposure to negative coping mechanisms such as survival sex.
- There is an urgent need to improve access to quality healthcare which remains challenging for CAR refugees. A majority live in communities without health facilities or with ill-equipped and under-staffed health centres that face frequent shortage of drugs.
- Hygiene kits for young women and girls of childbearing age are much needed, as there are several unattended births among the newly arrived population.
- There is a need to continuously strengthen COVID-19 awareness and prevention measures in communities hosting refugees, including in relocation sites, given the increased risks of infection, as a result of mass movements and crowded settlements.
- There is an urgent need for the rehabilitation and construction of boreholes and other water sources to provide good drinking water for newly arrived CAR refugees. Most of them are currently dependent on water from streams and rivers which pose considerable health risks.
- There is an urgent need to rehabilitate and build schools and to provide emergency education services in host communities to accommodate new CAR refugee children, while these are also provided with school material.
- Farming and fishing equipment, as well as vocational training are needed to strengthen self-reliance of refugees and to improve the resilience of impoverished host communities.
- There is need to improve the extremely poor road network in order to facilitate access to refugees in the three provinces affected by the new influx. Inherent logistics challenges are slowing down lifesaving humanitarian aid to populations in need. This need has been brought up with the Congolese authorities and development actors.
- There is an urgent need for emergency sanitation facilities such as community latrines and showers to prevent the spread of diseases and to protect the intimacy of refugees, especially women and girls who face increased risks of SGBV when they share sanitary facilities with men.
- Psychosocial support is needed for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). 101 cases of SGBV have been identified and reported in the three provinces affected by the influx by the end of March 2021.
- UNHCR continues to raise funds to airlift more emergency equipment from Kinshasa to remote refugee hosting locations such as Yakoma and to warehouse stocks are also needed.

### IV- ACTIONS

- Biometric registration and verification of newly arrived refugees from the Central African Republic is continuing in Nzakara some 30km from Gbadolite and Pandu about 120km from Bili in North Ubangi Province. As of 04 May 2021, UNHCR and CNR have registered a total of 60,314 persons (16,083 households) in North Ubangi South Ubangi, Bas Uele provinces and in the capital Kinshasa. About 67% of the total number of registered persons are new, while 33% are people already existing in the UNHCR database.

- On 30 April, UNHCR and partners have relocated a fifth convoy of 143 CAR refugees (38 households) from Yakoma, North Ubangi Province, to a new settlement in Modale, 35km away. Since the launch of the operation on 17 April, five convoys have transported a total 595 individuals (154 households) to Modale. The sixth convoy is scheduled for Friday 07 May. UNHCR is currently targeting around 4,000 persons for relocation to Modale. The settlement has the capacity to host 10,000 refugees. All necessary infrastructure is being developed there by UNHCR and its partners, which will serve both refugees and host community members.
- UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi welcomed the third convoy of CAR refugees relocated from Yakoma to Modale during a one-day visit to the village in North Ubangi Province. He also met with local authorities in Modale, Yakoma and Gbadolite to reaffirm the importance of responding to this new influx.
- The Director of “Education cannot wait”, the first global fund dedicated to education in emergencies and protracted crises, Ms. Yasmine Sherif, has announced a donation of \$2 million USD emergency funding for education to UNHCR to provide access to quality education to Central African refugee children, as well as to the children of local communities hosting them. She accompanied the High Commissioner for Refugees in his visit to Modale village.
- Work is continuing at the Modale site, to accommodate the newly relocated refugees. 112 plots have been carved out, and 103 emergency family shelters implanted, including 93 entirely completed, while 10 others are under construction. The Modale government primary school and health centre are being enlarged with more blocks. Rehabilitation work is well on course on three bridges on the road linking Yakoma to Modale. A borehole, 18 blocks of community latrines have been completed while 10 others are about to be completed. Eight other blocks of latrines have been completed and equipped with handwashing stations at the transit centre. Five community emergency shelters have been set up as well as one reception hangar.
- UNHCR and the National Commission for Refugees (CNR) are progressively distributing 2,117 already printed refugee identity cards to registered refugees in Yakoma, North Ubangi Province.
- UNHCR distributed emergency cash assistance to a total of 26,566 (7,862 households) individual refugees and host community members in Yakoma (North Ubangi) from 24 to 28 March and in Ndu and Yangi (Bas Uele) from 13 to 20 April 2021. The use of the cash given out is restricted to the purchase of core relief items (CRIs) and hygiene kits for women of child-bearing age.
- UNHCR facilitated the distribution of high energy biscuits by WFP to 212 refugee and host community households of persons with special needs in Dissangu and Dongobe settlements, Bas Uele Province.
- UNHCR and partner AIDES are continuing medical and nutrition screening for newly arrived refugees at biometric registration and verification points. So far approximately 38,406 persons have been screened in North Ubangi, South Ubangi and Bas Uele provinces. 3,817 of them have received treatment for prevalent diseases including malaria, respiratory tract infections, diarrhoea and malnutrition.
- UNHCR and the National Refugee Commission (CNR) have set up seven local protection committees comprising of seven members each in the localities of Sagila, Sambolola, Congo River, Zongo centre, Izato, Mawuya and Zambi in South Ubangi Province. The committee members have received office equipment and were trained on their roles and on the mandate of UNHCR with regards to international protection. The local protection committees are tasked with monitoring and reporting protection incidents in the zones hosting CAR refugees. 36 other committees already exist in North Ubangi, South Ubangi and Bas Uele provinces.
- UNHCR has carried out four monitoring missions in Monga and Kanzawi, Bas Uele Province, to identify and assess the situation of persons with special needs. During these missions, a total of 289 persons with special needs received assistance in terms of basic needs, including 17 people who received second-hand clothes, soaps, and food items. 17 others have received cash assistance from UNHCR in Yabongo and Ndu centre.
- UNHCR, AIDES and local NGOs carried out awareness-raising on sexual and gender-based violence in the localities of Nguru, Nganzamba, Ndayo, Wasso, Gbagi, Yakoma, Monga and Kanzawi in North Ubangi and Bas Uele provinces. About 1,404 refugees and host community members were reached by the SGBV messages.
- UNHCR together with the local NGO LIZADEL identified nine new cases of SGBV, provided psychological support to seven survivors.
- UNHCR and its partner APEE provided psychological support to about 22 CAR refugee children at risk, including separated and unaccompanied children, at a children’s games village (Espace Ami Enfant) in Ndayo, on the outskirts of Yakoma, North Ubangi Province. A total of 302 children have been received at the centre where they have benefitted from recreational activities and other forms of assistance.

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