

AD HOC UPDATE #4: New influx from the Central African Republic to the DRC

13 January 2021



Marie, 63, sits with three of her grandchildren in Ndu village, Bas-Uele Province © UNHCR/Nentobo

I- SITUATION

- **Elections**

Presidential and legislative elections were held in the Central African Republic (CAR) on Sunday 27 December 2020 in a tense security context. Several armed groups who called off a ceasefire decided to merge into a single entity, called the "Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC) and resume their military operations against the Government. The opposition fears massive electoral fraud to reelect President Faustin Archange Touadéra and called for the postponement of the vote.

- **Insecurity**

The security situation in Bangui, the capital of CAR remains calm with the presence of UN peacekeepers who help provide security. This apparent calm contrasts with tensions in the rest of the country, where death threats against voters or attacks on polling stations prevented a significant portion of the population from voting. There have been reports of atrocities and other violence against civilians committed by armed groups in the occupied localities during recent days. Following violence and insecurity in the towns of Damara (Ombella-M'Poko Prefecture) and Bangassou (Mbomou) in CAR on 2 and 3 January 2021, more than 42,000 people crossed the border from CAR into the DRC, including over 15,000 individuals who came to Ndu, Bas Uele Province and over 24,000 who arrived in the localities of Yakoma, Boduna and Pandu in North Ubangi Province.

Return movements have been observed in Ndu village as the population fears a retaliation by loyalist forces who, according to them, will attempt to attack rebel positions in order to restore state authority. These families attempt to return to their villages of origin with the aim of recovering some of their personal belongings and bringing them back to the DRC.

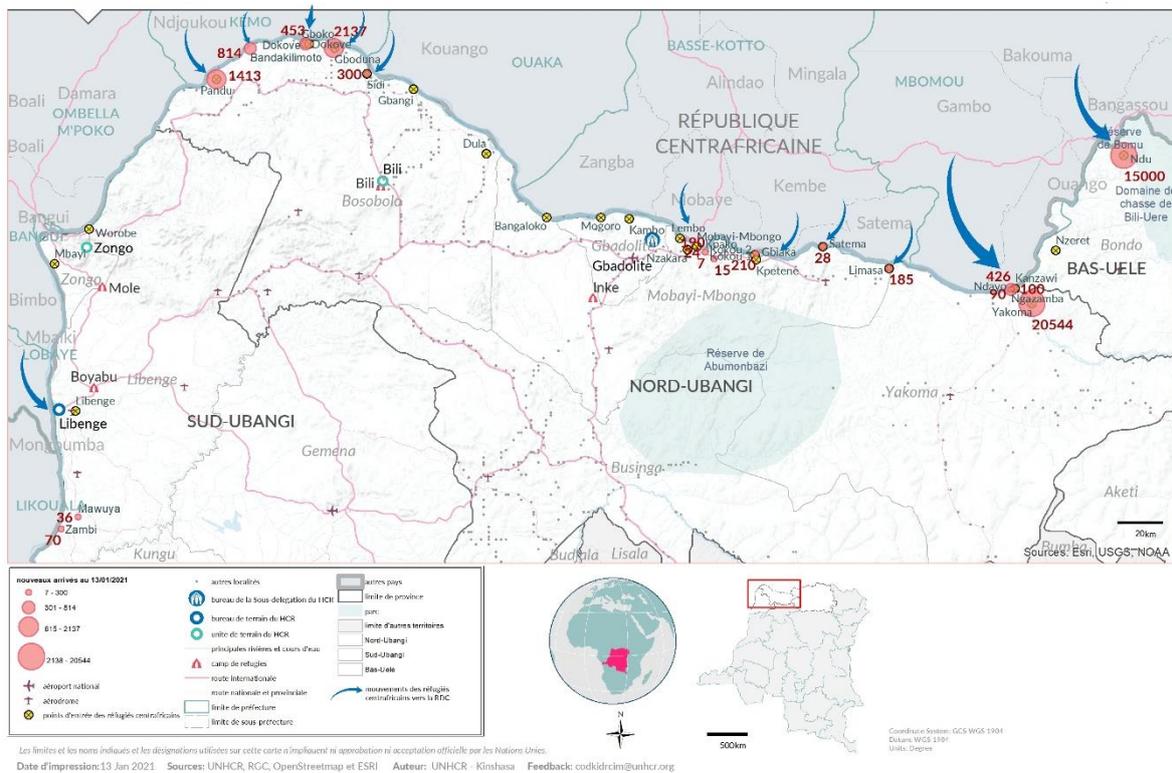
According to UNHCR teams who were in Yakoma, North Ubangi Province on January 12, people from CAR arriving in the DRC are originally from the southeastern town of Béma. Most new arrivals are staying with host communities or in makeshift shelters.

Due to violence and insecurity in the Broumou and Djoukou groupement in CAR since 24 December 2020, an influx has been observed in the localities of Boduna, Bandakilimoto, and Gboko in North Ubangi Province. The arrivals report that several villages have been looted, including Mbele, Broumou, Gba, Dourou, Gbada, Lisara, Banahimbi, Dengou, Badja, Ngavourou, Bango, Dekobimbi, Yao, Gbokogeme, and Djoukou.

• **Consequences of the voluntary repatriation operation**

Insecurity in CAR could affect the voluntary repatriation operation which was relaunched in November 2020 since the COVID-19 pandemic forced border closures. Several areas deemed safe to receive returnees are potentially controlled by rebels. It should be noted that more than 17,000 refugees currently living at Mole and Boyabu camps in South Ubangi Province had initially expressed their intention to return home.

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



II- STATISTICS

As of **12 January 2021**, **42,042 individuals from the Central African Republic** arrived in the DRC according to local sources. The figure is yet to be verified.

Locality	Province	Geographic situation	TOTAL
Ndu	Bas-Uele Province	120 KM North East of Gbadolite	15,000
Kanzawi		210 KM North of Gbadolite	100
Total Bas-Uélé			15,100
Yakoma	North Province Ubangi	195 KM North of Gbadolite	20,544
Boduna		245 KM of Gbadolite	2,137
Pandou		300 KM of Gbadolite	1,413
Bandakilimoto		280 KM of Gbadolite	814
Dokove/Gboko		250 KM of Gbadolite	453

Ngazamba		205 KM East of Gbadolite	426
Sidi		230 KM of Gbadolite	300
Byaka		55 KM of Gbadolite	210
Kokou 2		28 KM East of Gbadolite	190
Limassa		135 KM North of Gbadolite	185
Ndayo		200 KM East of Gbadolite	90
Satema		107 KM from Gbadolite	28
Kpako		27 KM East of Gbadolite	24
Bassapekambo		43 KM from Gbadolite	15
Kokou 1		28 KM East of Gbadolite	7
Total North Ubangi			26,836
Zambi	South Ubangi	74 KM from Libenge	70
Mawuya		62 KM from Libenge	36
Total South Ubangi			106
ESTIMATED TOTAL			42,042

III- NEEDS

The greatest needs of the new arrivals regard food, water, shelter, health care, documentation, education, Core relief items and sanitation to limit prevent the spread of the coronavirus and other epidemic diseases.

- Many families arriving from the Central African Republic are welcomed by host community families, while others seek shelter under makeshift tents along the Ubangi river. These families arrived in the DRC with few or no personal belongings.
- In some host community villages, health care is almost non-existent with very little medical equipment, medicines, or trained health care personnel.
- The arrival of more than 15,000 people from CAR in Ndu, Bas-Uele Province, is placing a great strain on resources and on host families in this border village which usually has a population of 3,500 people.
- Humanitarian access to newly arrived individuals from CAR currently staying at Kpako and Koukou sites on the banks of the Ubangi River, two kilometers from the village of Nzakara, North Ubangi Province, remains impossible due to the problem of access as these individuals are settled on islets in the Ubangi River that are far from the host villages. Some people are now being accommodated by local host communities who often lack the resources to meet their own needs.
- It is important to strengthen COVID-19 prevention measures at border services (with infra-red thermometers, masks, hand washing devices, etc.).
- UNHCR is raising resources to airlift more emergency equipment from Kinshasa to Gbadolite to assist people in need as quickly as possible. Further resources for trucking this equipment as well as for warehousing stocks are also needed.

IV- ACTIONS

- UNHCR works closely with the Provincial Government, the National Commission for Refugees (CNR), UN agencies (WFP and UNICEF), implementing partners (ADSSE, AIDES, AIRD and ACTED) and operational partners (Congolese Red Cross, MSF Belgium and LIZADEL).
- UNHCR has strengthened its presence on the ground to respond to this situation and continues to monitor the situation at the border along the Ubangi River. UNHCR teams were present in the localities of Moyabi-Bongo, Nzakara, Kambo and Ndyasembi, Yakoma, Satema, Ngansa, Biyaka, Bobo, Yakoma and Bosolo axis in North Ubangi Province. UNHCR is currently in Ndu locality in Bas-Uele Province as well as in Yakoma, Pandu, Dokove, Bandakilimoto, Dula and Boko North Ubangi Province and Mawuya Zambi, Tshume and Lukamalembe in South Ubangi Province.
- Following the arrival of more than 15,000 people from CAR in Ndu, Bas-Uele province, UNHCR continues to identify people with specific needs, and who may need assistance. UNHCR continues its sensitization sessions in Ndu to temporarily relocate the new arrivals to Yabongo site located three kilometers further inland further inland where they will be safer from any conflict on the other side of the border and where the registration exercise will take place. While the people may be sheltered temporarily in a transit centre, UNHCR continues to promote shelter

outside of camps, with a view to providing effective protection and assistance to refugees while contributing to local infrastructure. A multisectoral humanitarian needs assessment and pre-registration was carried out by CNR and UNHCR teams in the Ndu and Yakoma areas.

- Together with the CNR, UNHCR registered 258 new individual asylum applications during a registration activity targeting newly arrived families at Kpako, Kokou 1 and 2 near Nzakara, North Ubangi Province. In addition, UNHCR is verifying the status of individuals from CAR who had previously been recognized as refugees but who had returned to CAR spontaneously and now are in the DRC again to seek refuge, due to the insecurity in their country.
- Awareness-raising sessions are conducted for authorities, state services and border security forces in the town of Gbadolite, the localities of Mobayi Mbongo, Nzakara, Kambo, Morogo, Lembo, Pandu and Sidi in North Ubangi province, to facilitate access of asylum seekers to the Congolese Territory. Following the plea made by the joint teams, the Provincial Minister of Interior and Security issued instructions to state services operating at the border to facilitate access to Congolese territory for asylum seekers.
- UNHCR is continuing its activities to identify persons with special needs, including female-headed households and separated or unaccompanied children.
- Based on the recommendations of the assessment missions, UNHCR plans to distribute basic household items to the most vulnerable people.

UNHCR will continue to provide regular updates should the situation evolve.

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