

AD HOC UPDATE #5: New influx from the Central African Republic to the DRC

22 January 2021



UNHCR/ CNR register newly arrived asylum seekers from CAR in Ndu, Bas-Uele Province © UNHCR/Nentobo

I- SITUATION

- **Elections**

Presidential and legislative elections were held on 27 December 2020 in the Central African Republic (CAR) in a tense security context characterized by sporadic violence. 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). They resumed military operations against the government, carrying out deadly attacks in major towns including on the outskirts of the capital Bangui. There have been fears of further violence, since the validation of the victory of re-elected president, Faustin Archange Touadera by CAR's Constitutional Court on Monday 18 January 2021.

- **Insecurity**

Security has been tightened in the capital Bangui, with UN peacekeepers maintaining relative calm. The government declared a 15-day state of emergency on Thursday 21 November 2021. There are heightened 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. Following a rebel assault on the outskirts of Bangui on 13 January, violence and insecurity in the towns of Damara (Ombella-M'Poko Prefecture) and Bangassou (Mbomou) in CAR on 2 and 3 January 2021, local authorities on the DRC side have reported that more than 90,000 people crossed the border from CAR into the DRC. These reports include over 46,000 arrivals in Ndu, Kanzawi, Chefferie Deni and sixteen other localities in Bas Uele Province, over 35,000 in the localities of Yakoma, Boduna, Pandu and fourteen other sites in North Ubangi Province and an estimated 10,000 in Congo riviere, Bandulku, Libenge, Zongo and eight other villages in South Ubangi Province. The newly displaced population reported human rights violations against civilians and looting by armed groups in various villages in CAR.

Gona		680 km from Gbadolite	219	
Yangabandigi		690 km from Gbadolite	86	
Kpete		460 km from Gbadolite	109	
Gbiavo		457 km from Gbadolite	211	
Bakpolo		617 km from Gbadolite	96	
Mangbangu		615 km from Gbadolite	2114	
Basukpio		655 km from Gbadolite	1006	
Bulumasi		600 km from Gbadolite	3024	
Baday		620 km from Gbadolite	64	
Total Bas-Uélé			46,659	
Yakoma	North Province	195 km North of Gbadolite	21,089	
Boduna		245 km from Gbadolite	3,454	
Pandu		300 km from Gbadolite	1,413	
Bandakilimoto		280 km from Gbadolite	814	
Dokove/Gboko		250 km from Gbadolite	453	
Ngazamba		205 km from Gbadolite	426	
Sidi		230 km from Gbadolite	5,080	
Byaka		55 km from Gbadolite	210	
Kokou 2		28 km from Gbadolite	190	
Limassa		135 km from Gbadolite	185	
Ndayo		200 km from Gbadolite	90	
Satema		107 km from Gbadolite	28	
Kpako		27 km East of Gbadolite	24	
Bassapekambo		43 km from Gbadolite	869	
Baladamo		178 km from Gbadolite	515	
Dula		150 km from Gbadolite	2	
Kokou 1		28 km from Gbadolite	7	
Buda		207 km from Gbadolite	482	
Total North Ubangi			35,331	
Zambi		South Province	74 KM from Libenge	70
Mawuya	62 KM from Libenge		36	
Bandulku			874	
Gbandi Rive			677	
Libenge			30	
Congo Riviere			3126	
Samborola			876	
Sagila			1834	
Mbay			233	
Landangai 1			676	
Nzamboto			1183	
Zongo			448	
Total South Ubangi			10,063	
ESTIMATED TOTAL			92,053	

III- NEEDS

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

- Many families arriving from the Central African Republic are welcomed by host community families, while others seek shelter under makeshift shelters along the Ubangi river. These families arrived in the DRC with few or no personal belongings.
- Humanitarian assistance to newly arrived individuals from CAR currently staying at Kpako and Koukou sites on the banks of the Ubangi River, two kilometres from the village of Nzakara, North Ubangi Province, remains impossible because these individuals are settled on islets in the Ubangi River that are far from the host villages and difficult to access. Some people are now being accommodated by local host communities who often lack the resources to meet their own needs.
- The arrival of more than 17,000 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 contains a population of 3,500 people.
- There is an urgent need to relocate new asylum seekers squatting very close to the borders where they are susceptible to risks of further attacks by armed groups from CAR.

- There is need for psychosocial support for some of the most vulnerable groups, including survivors of SGBV that UNHCR is currently identifying.
- In some host community villages, health care is almost non-existent with very little medical equipment, medicines, or trained health care personnel.
- Emergency education services are needed to reinforce protection for children who make up a significant portion of the displaced population.
- 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 a needed.

IV- ACTIONS

- UNHCR is working 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) to provide life-saving assistance to the newly arrived population.
- Awareness-raising sessions were 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.
- UNHCR has facilitated the training of 16 traditional leaders, administrative authorities, security services and refugee leaders in Ndu, on humanitarian and international protection principles.
- UNHCR continues awareness-raising sessions in Ndu to temporarily relocate the new arrivals to Yabongo site, located three kilometers further inland, where they will be safe from any armed attacks from CAR and closer to biometric registration points.
- Although these asylum seekers 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.
- UNHCR and CNR joint teams continue to monitor the situation at the borders along the Ubangi River.
- UNHCR and CNR have so far registered 4,289 new individual asylum applications in Ndu, Bas Uele province, since a vast registration exercise was launched on 15 January 2021, targeting newly arrived families. In the process of registration, former refugees who had spontaneously returned to CAR and fled again to the DRC due to the current insecurity will be identified and will not be re-registered.
- UNHCR and partners carried out medical screening for about 1,000 persons during registrations in Ndu. Common illnesses reported included malaria, diarrhoea and malnutrition. The health situation risks degenerating if emergency shelter and other assistance is not provided before the start of the rainy season in a couple of months.
- UNHCR has dispatched a stock of core relief items comprising 2,500 sleeping mats, 2,500 blankets, mosquito nets, 487 kitchen sets, 20,000 surgical masks, 200 tarpaulins and other items. These are moved by truck overland and will be distributed to the most vulnerable persons amongst the new arrivals in Bas Uele, while further emergency assistance is being prepared.
- AIRD has built two hangars in Ndu, to serve as a warehouse for core relief items.
- ACTED rehabilitated five boreholes in Ndu and the Yabongo site, to improve access to potable water.
- UNHCR continues to identify persons with specific needs, including female-headed households and separated or unaccompanied children in Ndu. So far, 13 SGBV cases, 20 children at risk and 326 PSNs have been identified in the affected areas. AIDES provided psychosocial support to one survivor of child marriage.

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

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