

UPDATE: Voluntary Repatriation of CAR refugees in DRC

25 November 2019



On 21 November, a **first convoy of 396** Central African refugees left Mole camp, in the DRC's Sud Ubangi province, marking the start of the voluntary repatriation of CAR refugees from the DRC.

They are repatriated to the Central African capital, Bangui, and to several prefectures where the **security situation** has improved in the past two years.

A **Tripartite Agreement** was signed on 5 July 2019 between UNHCR and the governments of DRC and CAR in Kinshasa, to lay the groundwork for the first voluntary repatriations for CAR refugees since 2013, when most of them arrived in the DRC.

In October 2019, UNHCR carried out a **survey** on refugees' willingness to return. Over **4,000** confirmed they wanted to return, including 3,444 who wanted to do so immediately.

Background

In 2013, thousands of Central African refugees crossed into DRC after the outbreak of armed conflict in their country. Sporadic resurgence of violence also led to new arrivals in DRC between 2017 and 2019. With the gradual return of peace to certain parts of CAR, and the signature of a peace deal between the Central African Government and armed groups in February 2019, some refugees are beginning to show interest in returning home. On 5 July 2019, UNHCR signed a Tripartite Agreement with the CAR and DRC Governments, laying down mechanisms for voluntary returns in safety and dignity. On 21 November, the first convoy of 396 refugees left for Bangui, in CAR. It was the first of several convoys that will transport the 3,444 refugees who confirmed their intention to return immediately from Mole and Boyabu camps, Sud Ubangi province. A majority of this first phase, departing from Mole camp, is returning to Bangui. The 2,500 other voluntary repatriation candidates are from Boyabu camp and are mostly returning to Lobaye in CAR. Other areas approved for these initial returns include Ombella M'Poko, Sangha-Mbaere and La Kemo.

UNHCR's response

- **Tripartite Agreement:** UNHCR and the Governments of CAR and DRC **signed a Tripartite Agreement** on 5 July.
- **Intentions survey:** Carried out between 11 and 14 October by UNHCR and CNR.
- **Transit Center:** Set up in Mole camp and in Batanga, near Boyabu camp. In TCs, refugees receive a meal, medical care and transportation through UNHCR's partners ADSSE, AIRD and ADES.
- **Return package:** UNHCR provides **cash assistance** and **basic household item kits**, while WFP provides **three-month food rations**.
- **Reintegration:** UNHCR constructed **classrooms** in Lobaye, CAR, to enable schools to host returning children, and contribute to their reintegration in the educational system. UNHCR and CNR are helping refugees acquire **civil status documents** and school enrolment certificates.

Remaining gaps

More refugees located in Nord and Sud Ubangi provinces (DRC) are showing **interest in returning**. Additional funding is needed to facilitate their repatriation in 2020. **Development actors'** involvement will be needed to support the Central African Government in its effort to ensure the sustainable reintegration of returnees.

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