UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

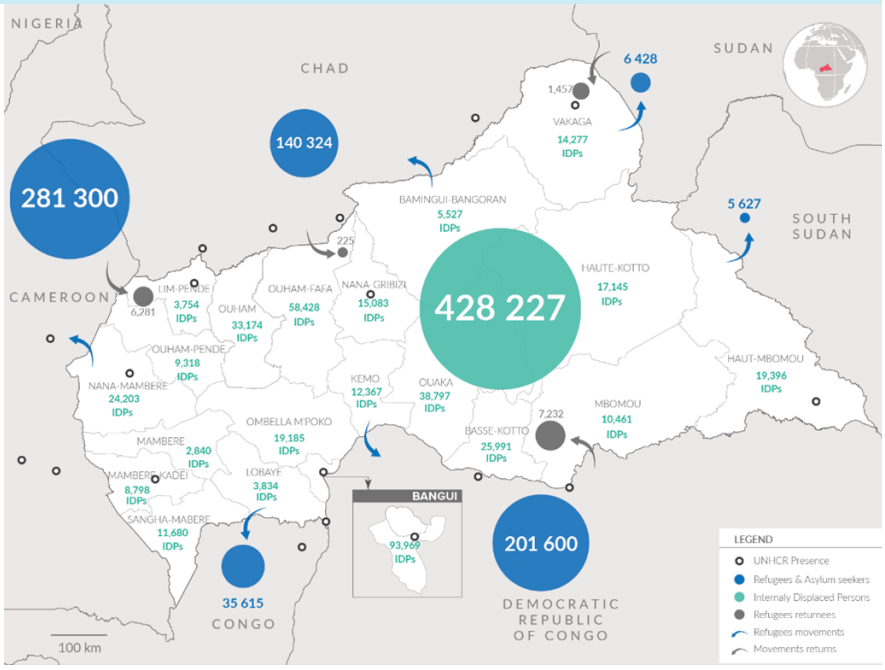
Central African Republic (CAR)

Operational Update

Quarterly | January - March 2026

STATISTICS / MAPS | March 31, 2026

1 202 392 Forcibly displaced population	
428 227 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)	
59 467 Refugees and asylum seekers in CAR	
75 031 Central Africans voluntarily repatriated from neighbouring countries since 2017	



UNHCR's operations in the Central African Republic (CAR) are based on protection through presence, a central pillar of the humanitarian response. In a context marked by security volatility and the repercussions of the Sudanese crisis, particular attention is also being paid to emergency response.

At the same time, the search for durable solutions is a major priority, by supporting the voluntary, safe and dignified return of Central African refugees, while ensuring their sustainable reintegration and their contribution to national development.

The Government of the Central African Republic, UNHCR and partners are providing protection and multisectoral assistance to internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees, including Chadians and Sudanese, while promoting durable solutions for Central African returnees. UNHCR aligns its interventions with national priorities, including the National Development Programme, the National Strategy for Durable Solutions, and the CAR Solutions Support Platform outlined in the 2022 Yaoundé Declaration.

620 Central Africans have been voluntarily repatriated from Cameroon and the DRC to the CAR since January 2026.		**2 500** People affected by the floods have been helped with kits of essential goods.		**737** Sudanese refugees were registered individually.	
199 Returnee households received hygiene kits.		**250** Returning IDP households have received shelter kits.		**20 352** Refugees received cash assistance.	

As As part of capacity-building for Sudanese refugee women and host community members, they have received vocational training in soap-making, baking, and knitting in Birao. © UNHCR/Stella FATIME

Operating context

The CAR is at a turning point in its post-conflict trajectory. Significant progress has been made, including through the implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation, administrative decentralization and the holding of the first local elections in more than four decades. This reflects a strong desire to consolidate the State and bring institutions closer to the population.

However, this progress remains fragile, particularly in the north-eastern and south-eastern border areas, which are affected by the presence of armed groups, porous borders and the repercussions of the Sudanese crisis.

On the security front, several regions of the country are experiencing a relative improvement, with a reduction in open clashes between armed groups, a gradual redeployment of state authorities, and expanded humanitarian access to previously hard-to-reach areas. These dynamics contribute to an environment more conducive to the voluntary return of populations and the resumption of socio-economic activities.

Nevertheless, security improvements remain unevenly distributed across the country. The north-eastern and south-eastern border areas remain particularly exposed to security risks, exacerbated by the spillover effects of the Sudanese crisis, the continued presence of armed groups and the gradual withdrawal of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

These factors continue to affect the protection of civilian populations and limit sustainable access to adequate basic services.

Since April 2023, CAR has been hosting thousands of Sudanese refugees fleeing the conflict, mainly via the Am Dafock border, as well as Chadian refugees. In collaboration with the National Commission for Refugees (CNR), UNHCR and the government ensure their reception, registration and monitoring of their protection at the borders.

With support from the humanitarian community, essential services are being provided to them, including protection, food assistance, shelter, health care, and education, particularly in Korsi, Vakaga Prefecture. This response is part of a context in which the relative improvement in security in certain areas allows for better organization of assistance and more regular access for the population.

As of 31 March 2026, CAR hosts 59,467 refugees and asylum seekers, including 50,922 refugees and 8,545 asylum seekers. The majority are Sudanese refugees (70 per cent), followed by refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (13 per cent), Chad (10 per cent) and South Sudan (7 per cent). This represents a 7% decrease from the end of December 2025, mainly due to individual registrations of Sudanese refugees.

At the same time, the relative improvement in the security situation in some regions has contributed to the continuation of voluntary returns of Central Africans. A total of 75,031 people have been repatriated voluntarily, in safe and dignified conditions, since the launch of the operation in 2017, including 21,445 in 2025 and 620 in 2026. Most returnees came from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (43 per cent), followed by Cameroon (40 per cent) and the Republic of the Congo (15 per cent). These returns reflect the growing confidence of the population in the improvement of the security situation, while stressing the need to continue stabilization, recovery and sustainable reintegration efforts to consolidate the gains made and prevent the risk of relapse.

Situation of Sudanese refugees in the prefectures of Vakaga, Bamingui-Bangoran, Haute-Kotto, Ouaka, Mbomou and Haut-Mbomou

As part of the community protection approach, UNHCR supported CNR in revitalizing the steering committees in Korsi, a refugee neighbourhood in Birao. A total of 27 members, including 15 women, was elected to serve on four committees (Executive, Women, Youth and Elders), to strengthen refugee participation in governance and community decision-making.

Registration and documentation

As of 31 March 2026, the number of Sudanese refugees and asylum seekers registered in the Central African Republic stands at 35,717, 85% of whom are women and children. Of these, 22,327 people have been registered in Korsi and Birao by UNHCR and CNR, while 13,390 refugees are in hard-to-reach areas in the prefectures of Bamingui-Bangoran, Haute-Kotto, Ouaka, Mbomou and Haut-Mbomou.

New arrivals have been identified in the sub-prefecture of Ouanda, in the prefecture of Vakaga. A joint UNHCR-CNR mission has registered 737 people in remote areas, including Sikikédé and Manou, to improve registration and access to assistance.

Protection

In January, UNHCR and its partner CIAUD continued to strengthen the economic inclusion and empowerment of refugees in Korsi, through vocational training, distribution of starter kits, ongoing support and targeted livelihood support. Regular monitoring of savings and loan associations (VSLAs) has revealed a strong overall commitment, reinforced by technical support to improve financial management and savings and credit practices.

However, despite inter-agency assistance, major shortcomings remain for Sudanese refugees and host communities. Access to water remains below emergency standards (10.4 litres per person per day), and sanitation conditions remain critical, with an average of 52 people per latrine, increasing health risks.

A joint UNHCR mission with CNR, partners NOURRIR, CIAUD and PARET, as well as MINUSCA, visited Ouanda Djallé and Sikikede in Vakaga.

In Ouanda-Djallée, UNHCR and its partners (CNR, CIAUD and NOURRIR) participated in a joint mission led by OCHA from 3 to 7 March 2026. The mission conducted a rapid assessment of humanitarian needs and provided essential kits to 243 Sudanese refugee households, previously registered at the first level by the CNR.

Another UNHCR-led rapid needs assessment mission identified the humanitarian needs of populations affected by forced displacement. As a result of the mission, UNHCR and its partners provided non-food item assistance to 510 households, including 381 IDP households and 129 Sudanese refugee households. In addition, the CNR has carried out the first-level registration of 422 Sudanese refugee households.

Accountability to affected populations

In Korsi, UNHCR and its partner, CIAUD, continued to strengthen accountability to refugee populations through the collection of returns, awareness-raising, and follow-up on complaints. The concerns expressed in February mainly focused on water, hygiene and sanitation services, and shelter, and were referred to by the relevant actors for rapid action.

In addition, two hygiene awareness sessions were organized in Birao, bringing together 66 participants. These exchanges helped to improve hygiene practices and prevent waterborne and infectious diseases within the community.

Prevention of and Response to Gender-based Violence (GBV) and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)

In Vakaga, UNHCR and CIAUD continued to prevent and respond to gender-based violence, providing psychosocial support to survivors. Community awareness-raising activities, including the engagement of men and boys, have been carried out to prevent sexual violence in the long term.

Child protection

In Korsi, UNHCR and its partners continued child protection activities through mobile child-friendly spaces, providing 135 refugee children with a safe environment conducive to their psychosocial well-being. The participation gap between girls and boys underscores the need to strengthen community mobilization to remove socio-cultural barriers that limit girls' involvement.

Language course at the Gueredomo School for the Integration of Refugees in Birao in the Vakaga in CAR. © UNHCR/ Stella FATIME

Education

UNHCR, in partnership with the Centre de Support en Santé Internationale (CSS) and the Vakaga Academic Inspectorate, continued its support for the integration of refugees into the national education system. French classes were provided to 132 beneficiaries to prepare Sudanese refugee students for education in the Central African Republic.

Water, hygiene and sanitation

In Korsi, UNHCR's partner, NOURRIR, has launched the construction of 80 semi-sustainable family latrines to improve access to sanitation and reduce the risk of waterborne diseases.

In addition, hygiene promotion activities have raised awareness among about 6,000 people through community actions aimed at improving public health conditions.

Food security and livelihoods

The World Food Programme (WFP), in coordination with UNHCR and partners, provided cash food assistance to 12,879 refugees in Korsi.

UNHCR and CIAUD carried out livelihood strengthening activities, including livestock support for 100 beneficiaries and training in income-generating activities for 50 beneficiaries. At the same time, awareness-raising actions have reached 1,210 people.

Four savings groups (VSLAs) are active in Korsi, Nguerendomo and Songo, promoting financial autonomy and community cohesion.

In Haute-Kotto and Ouandja-Kotto, 632 refugees also received cash assistance to cover their basic needs and promote their economic inclusion.

Shelter and non-food items

In Korsi, the construction of semi-durable shelters for people with special needs continues, with 150 shelters already completed. This intervention provides vulnerable households with safe and dignified living conditions.

On 16 March 2026, in Zoukoutouniala, Bamingui-Bangoran prefecture, CNR, UNHCR and War Child jointly assisted 510 households, including 129 Sudanese refugees and 381 internally displaced persons households, with the support of CIAUD partners.

Health and nutrition

In Birao, the medical teams of the CSSI and the IMC continued to provide health care to the refugees and host communities, treating 1018 people, including 835 refugees and 183 residents. Refugees represented the majority of patients, mainly for malaria and respiratory infections.

Reproductive health services have benefited more than 300 women, with deliveries fully attended by skilled personnel. In addition, nutritional screening has enabled the identification and treatment of moderate and severe malnutrition in children under 5 years of age.

Protection activities in Obo for Sudanese and Congolese refugees

During the 1st quarter of 2026, the security situation in the prefecture of Mbomou remained generally calm, without major incidents, thanks to regular patrols by security forces, which allowed the population to continue its activities freely.

However, on the Rafaï-Zemio axis, a climate of fear persists in several villages following the passage of armed groups. Human rights violations, including physical violence, arbitrary arrests, and cases of GBV, continue to be reported.

The security situation in Haut-Mbomou remains very unstable, seriously affecting the lives of the population. Insecurity hampers socio-economic activities; limits access to markets and basic services and increases the vulnerability of communities.

The analysis of the reported incidents reveals a still precarious protection situation in Mboki, Obo and Zemio.

The reported violations affect fundamental rights, including the rights to life, physical integrity, liberty, and property, reflecting a persistent climate of insecurity.

In this context, the National Commission for Refugees, CIAUD's partners, with the support of UNHCR, carried out a monitoring mission in Obo with refugees and internally displaced people to assess their needs regarding access to health services, protection, non-food items, and shelter.

On March 27, 2026, data update and registration activities for Sudanese and Congolese refugees were held in the locality.

In Mboki, Haut-Mbomou, as part of the implementation of the CERF project, UNHCR has officially handed over to the authorities 16 registers of supplementary judgments of birth certificates at the town hall of Mboki. A gesture that allows the authorities to issue birth certificates to newborns to deal with the risk of statelessness.

Situation of Chadian refugees in Betoko and Ouham prefecture

As of April 2023, community conflicts in Chad have forced more than 38,000 people to flee to the Central African Republic, including nearly 31,800 Chadian refugees and approximately 6,200 spontaneous Central African returnees.

As a result of monitoring activities conducted by CNR and UNHCR in the border villages (Bedaka, Bembéré, and Benamkor axes), about 6,712 people, or 2,515 households, were identified as living with host families. In the first quarter of the year, 3,458 Chadian refugees were registered by biometrics in Betoko, including 1,874 women and 1,584 men, across 909 households.

Of these, 424 people have specific needs, including:

- Unaccompanied children,
- Pregnant or breastfeeding women
- Sick older adults,
- People living with a disability.
- And people in need of medical care.

Humanitarian assistance and response to basic needs

During the period under review, 706 spontaneous returnee households were assisted with cash at the Paoua centre in Lim Pendé, for a total of 81 million CFA francs.

The World Food Programme has distributed cash assistance for food to Chadian refugees in Betoko—helping them meet their basic needs.

Child protection and well-being

CNR, UNHCR and their partners continued protection monitoring activities in the localities of Bossangoa, Paoua, Betoko, Bocaranga, Ngaoundaye Ndim and Koui. Overall, the protective environment was considered stable over the period under review.

However, some areas, including Bozoum and Ngaoudaye, in Ouham-Pende prefecture, were affected by a community crisis, leading to an increase in protection incidents in these localities.

Health & Nutrition

Between January and March 2026, approximately 1,500 curative consultations were conducted, of which 52% were for Chadian refugees and 48% for host communities, illustrating an inclusive approach to assistance.

The main causes of morbidity remain malaria (about 47% of cases) and digestive and respiratory infections.

UNHCR has supported the Lim-Pendé health district in transporting essential food items for the treatment of malnourished children in the said prefecture. About 500 boxes of products were transported by UNHCR from Bossangoa to Paoua from 21 to 22 February 2025. These products were made available to the Lim-Pende health district by UNICEF.

Responses to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

During the period under review, an overall improvement in the security situation was observed in the main cities and along the main roads in the Central African Republic. This positive development has led to the spontaneous return of 75,800 internally displaced people within the country, reflecting progress towards stabilization.

At the same time, some areas remain affected by displacement dynamics.

In Vakaga prefecture, more than 11,109 Central African nationals were forced to flee Am Dafock and seven other border villages, following alleged cross-border attacks by Sudan's RSF elements. The displaced populations have found refuge around the Temporary Operating Base (TOB) of the Zambian contingent.

In response, UNHCR and its partners have mobilized to provide emergency assistance and protection to those affected.

As of 31 March 2026, the total number of internally displaced people in Vakaga Prefecture stood at 14,277, highlighting the need for continued joint efforts to address humanitarian needs and support durable solutions.

In Haute-Kotto, in Bria, on March 25, 2026, the planning workshop for the development pole took place in the presence of local authorities, local civil society, United Nations system agencies, national and international NGOs, and traditional leaders.

Sustainable solutions

Between January and March 2026, more than 620 Central African refugees voluntarily returned from Cameroon and Chad to the Central African Republic, while authorities across various places of return identified around 15,000 spontaneous returnees.

These returns are part of UNHCR's core mandate to find durable solutions to forced displacement, including enabling refugees to return to their homes in safe, dignified, and sustainable conditions and contributing to the reconstruction of their communities.

UNHCR continued to work closely with the Government of the Central African Republic and its humanitarian and development partners to ensure safe returns and promote the socio-economic reintegration of returnees.

Voluntary repatriation operations from Cameroon, the Republic of Congo and the Democratic Republic of Congo to the localities of Bangui, Ombella-M'Poko, Berbérati, Bouar and Baoro have been suspended by the Central African authorities for better coordination with countries of asylum.

Since 2017, 75,031 Central African refugees have been accompanied in their voluntary return with the support of UNHCR and the Government.

A total of 235 semi-durable housing units have been built in the prefectures of Lobaye and Nana-Mambéré. In Baoro, a pilot area of return, and Mongoumba, school buildings have been built, while town halls and sub-prefectures have been rehabilitated.

The resuscitation room of the Berbérati Reference Hospital has been rehabilitated and equipped. Medical equipment and medicines have also been donated to several health centres located in the returning localities.

Some groups of returnees and the host community have benefited from agricultural equipment for farmers and livestock given to herders.

In addition, agro-pastoral groups in Baoro have been supported in reviving economic activities (agriculture, trade, employment) and improving access to sustainable livelihoods.

Beyond return, UNHCR focuses on the sustainable reintegration of returnees and internally displaced persons, supporting integrated approaches that also benefit host communities.

Towards the end of March, CNR, PARET and UNHCR simultaneously launched the registration of spontaneous returnees in several localities in the CAR (Lobaye, Ombelle M'poko, Lim Pende, Nana-Mambéré, Mambéré-Kadéï). The objective of this operation was to identify them, process their applications, and close their files in the countries of asylum.

About 15,000 have been identified, and the assistance process has been triggered.

Working in partnership

In the Central African Republic, UNHCR plays a key role in coordinating the humanitarian response, leading the Protection Cluster and co-leading the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) and Shelter/NFI clusters. Through this leadership, the organization actively advocates for the centrality of protection and the promotion of durable solutions for forcibly displaced people.

Working closely with the Government of the Central African Republic, UNHCR is strengthening its engagement with strategic partners to pool efforts and maximize the impact of interventions in support of displaced people and their host communities.

This partnership approach is reflected in the signing of cooperation agreements with key institutions such as UN Women and the Ministry of Agriculture, as well as in enhanced coordination with ministerial departments and local authorities.

In response to the influx of Sudanese and Chadian refugees, the refugee coordination model is being implemented, with UNHCR leading the response, in support of the Government, represented by the National Commission for Refugees (CNR), and in close collaboration with humanitarian and development partners.

Operational efficiency measures in CAR

In the face of reduced funding, UNHCR in CAR has redefined its operational priorities, resulting in a decrease in its geographical coverage and a refocusing of its core interventions.

To optimise the use of available resources, UNHCR has undertaken reforms and budgetary adjustments at all levels, while ensuring the quality and effectiveness of assistance to forcibly displaced populations are maintained. At the same time, UNHCR is strengthening resource pooling with UN agencies within the Dedicated Working Group (WGMR).

This approach aims to develop synergies across key areas, including logistics (inter-agency carpooling), security, remote site management, information technology, and administrative services, to reduce costs and improve coordination.

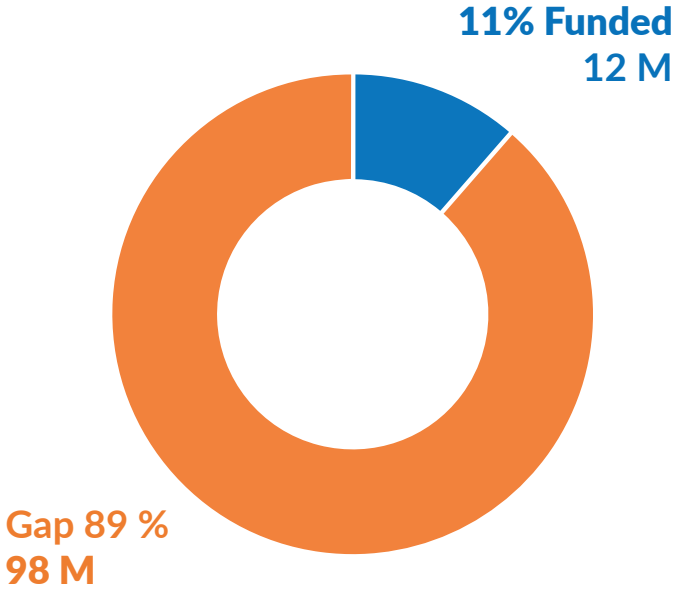
These measures enable economies of scale and strengthen the coherence of actions on the ground. They reflect UNHCR's willingness to adapt to budgetary constraints while preserving its ability to protect and assist the most vulnerable populations in a complex operating environment.

UNHCR is grateful for the generous support of donors to the CAR operation, as well as to those who have contributed to UNHCR's global and regional operations through non-targeted and flexible funding, including:

Canada | China | Denmark | European Union | Germany | Japan | Latter-day Saint Charities Australia | Mastercard Foundation | MINUSCA | Peacebuilding Fund | Sweden | Switzerland | UNAIDS | UNCERF | United States of America

FUNDING AS OF MARCH 31, 2026

$110 million USD
requested by UNHCR in CAR in 2026



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