

AD HOC UPDATE #6: New influx from the Central African Republic to the DRC

29 January 2021



New arrivals from CAR receive emergency core relief items from UNHCR and partner ADSSE in Zongo, South Ubangi Province. © UNHCR/Angela Ghansah

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.

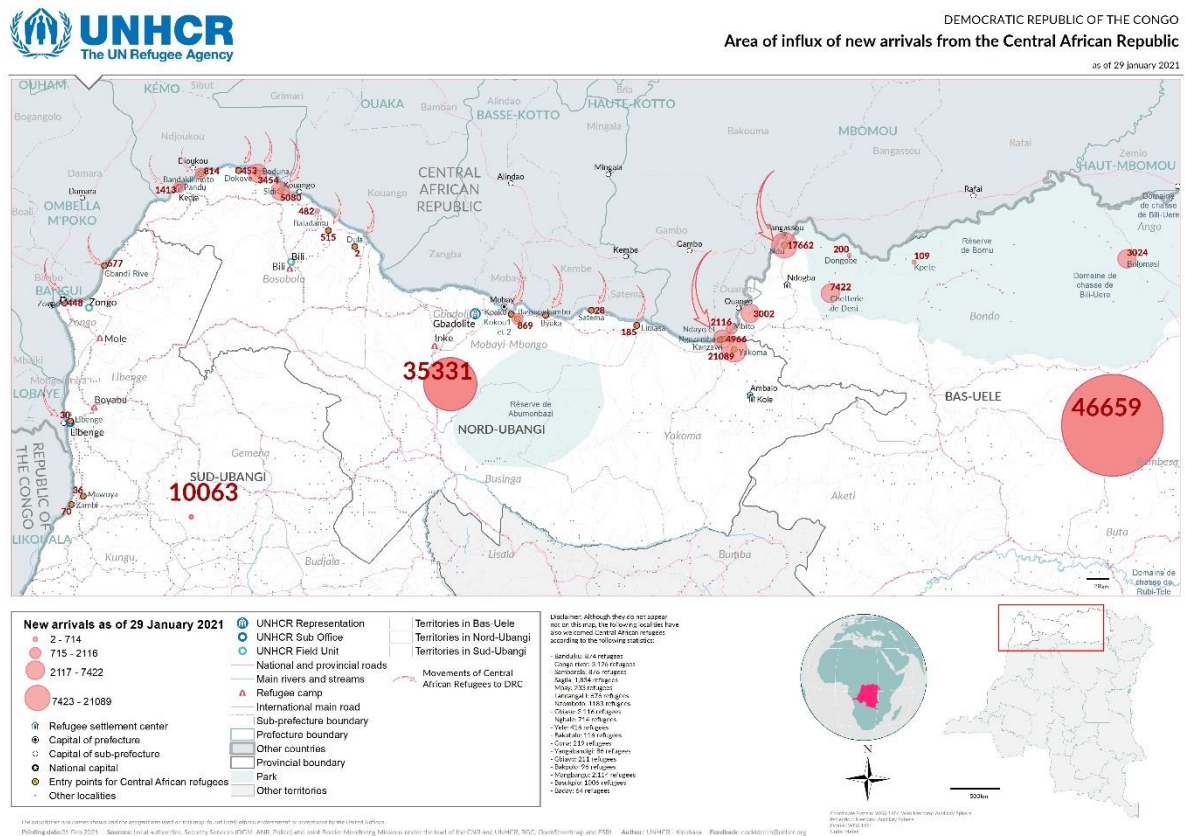
Most of the new arrivals remain very close to the borders where they face risks of further attacks and rights violations by armed groups. The majority of them are women, children, while there are also many other persons with special needs elderly persons at risk, persons with disabilities and survivors of SGBV.

UNHCR and the National Commission for Refugees (CNR) joint monitoring teams at the border in the three provinces affected by the influx, report that, most of the arrivals are from the south-eastern town of Béma. Bangassou, and most recently, Bangui. A majority of the new arrivals are staying with host communities or in makeshift shelters.

- Consequences on the voluntary repatriation operation**

Insecurity in CAR is likely to affect the voluntary repatriation operation which was 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 possibly controlled by rebels. It should be noted that some of the new arrivals from the outskirts of Bangui are possibly refugees who had returned in recent voluntary repatriations from Mole and Boyabu camps in South Ubangi province, between 2019 and 2020.

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



II- STATISTICS

As of **29 January 2021**, **92,053 individuals from the Central African Republic** have arrived in the DRC according to local sources. The figure is yet to be verified.

Locality	Province	Geographic situation	TOTAL
Ndu	Bas-Uele Province	315 km from Gbadolite	17,662
Kanzawi/Nire		200 km North of Gbadolite	4,966
Chefferie de Deni		345 km from Gbadolite	7422
Mbito		220 km from Gbadolite	2116
Gbiasu		200 km from Gbadolite	

Nzerret		215 km from Gbadolite	3002	
Ngbale		230 km from Gbadolite	714	
Gele		322 km from Gbadolite	416	
Dongobe		330 km from Gbadolite	200	
Bakutulu		332 km from Gbadolite	116	
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 1		28km from Gbadolite	7	
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	
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 regard food, water, shelter, health care, documentation, education, core relief items and sanitation to prevent the spread of the coronavirus and epidemic diseases.

- Some families arriving from the Central African Republic are provided shelter by host community families, while others seek shelter under makeshift shelters along the Ubangi river. Most families arrived in the DRC with very few or no personal belongings.
- Humanitarian access 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.
- Psychosocial support is needed for vulnerable groups, including survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (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. Persons with serious health conditions who identified during medical screenings in Ndu have to travel over 75km on extremely rough roads to Monga General Hospital, Bas Uele Province. This risks aggravating their medical condition.
- Emergency education services are needed to reinforce protection for children who make up a significant portion of the displaced population.
- There is a need to strengthen COVID-19 awareness and prevention measures at border services and host sites (with infra-red thermometers, masks, hand washing devices, etc.), given increased risks of infection as a result of mass movement and crowded settlement sites.
- 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 to the border areas as well as for warehousing stocks are also needed.
- Logistics support to transport more core relief items to affected areas is very urgent, given the approach of the rainy season, which will render movement on already extremely degraded or quasi inexistent roads in both North Ubangi and Bas Uele provinces impossible.

IV- ACTIONS

- UNHCR's Deputy Representative in the DRC met with North Ubangi provincial authorities, to reiterate the support of the UN Refugee Agency to the Congolese government. And to build opportunities for coordination of protection and assistance to newly arrived refugees, within UNHCR's alternative to camp approach. Meetings have also been held with 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 plan a coordinated and coherent response to the new influx.
- UNHCR held discussions with a World Bank delegation to advocate for the inclusion of refugees in a new project to develop social infrastructure such as schools and to provide direct assistance to vulnerable populations in North Ubangi province. Local authorities say over 35,000 new asylum seekers have arrived in the province, bringing to over 125,000 the total number of displaced persons from CAR hosted by the province.
- UNHCR is currently identifying possible sites where new arrivals can be integrated into the host communities. Social services and economic activities will be reinforced or developed in these areas, to ensure better protection, self-sufficiency for refugees and their hosts, as well as strengthen the resilience of Congolese communities whose limited resources are buckling under the weight of additional populations.
- UNHCR and CNR have already biometrically registered a total of 11,549 new individual asylum-seekers in Ndu, Bas Uele Province. These registrations will also be carried out in North Ubangi and South Ubangi Provinces in the coming days. They will enable UNHCR to plan protection activities and assistance to new refugees from CAR. In addition, UNHCR is verifying the status of persons from CAR, who had spontaneously returned to their country as registered refugees but fled again to the DRC due to the recent violence..
- With the rainy season to start in six weeks, UNHCR has continued pre-positioning of life-saving emergency supplies in Yakoma, North Ubangi Province before vast areas become inaccessible by road. About 2485 blankets, 2500 sleeping mats, 1500 buckets, 1312 mosquito nets, 485 kitchen sets, 475 jerry cans, 200 tarpaulins and 16,000 surgical masks are already in warehouses in Ndu and Yakoma.
- UNHCR and ADSSE distributed core relief items, including blankets, sleeping mats, jerry cans and mosquito nets, to 52 extremely vulnerable new asylum-seekers in South Ubangi Province. Similar persons are being identified in host sites for new arrivals in Bas Uele and North Ubangi provinces, while UNHCR mobilizes resources for a more robust and comprehensive response.
- AIDES carried out medical and nutritional screening for over 5,642 newly arrived asylum-seekers in Ndu, Bas Uele province. As the screening proceeds, treatment is being administered for prevalent diseases such as Malaria, intestinal infections, diarrhoea, respiratory tract infections and malnutrition.
- UNHCR continues awareness-raising sessions in Ndu to temporarily relocate the new arrivals to Yabongo site, located three kilometres further inland, where they will be safe from further raids by armed groups from CAR and closer to biometric registration points.
- UNHCR and CNR joint teams continue to monitor the situation at the borders along the Ubangi River.

- UNHCR continues to identify persons with special needs, including female-headed households and separated or unaccompanied children in Ndu. So far, 14 survivors of sexual violence, 20 children at risk and 326 persons with special needs 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.

Contact

Johannes van Gemund, Senior External Relations Officer, UNHCR Representation Kinshasa, gemund@unhcr.org, Tel: +243 817 009 484

Fabien Faivre, Associate External Relations Officer, UNHCR Representation Kinshasa, faivre@unhcr.org, Tel: +243 825 443 419

[DR Congo Emergency page](#) | [UNHCR DRC operation page](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#)