CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC SITUATION

UNHCR REGIONAL UPDATE 63

20 November – 31 December 2015

KEY FIGURES

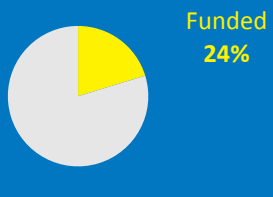
453,921
Central African refugees in Cameroon, Chad, DRC and Congo

7,661
Refugees and asylum seekers in Central African Republic

48,466
IDPs in the capital Bangui

FUNDING

USD 241 million
required for the situation in 2015



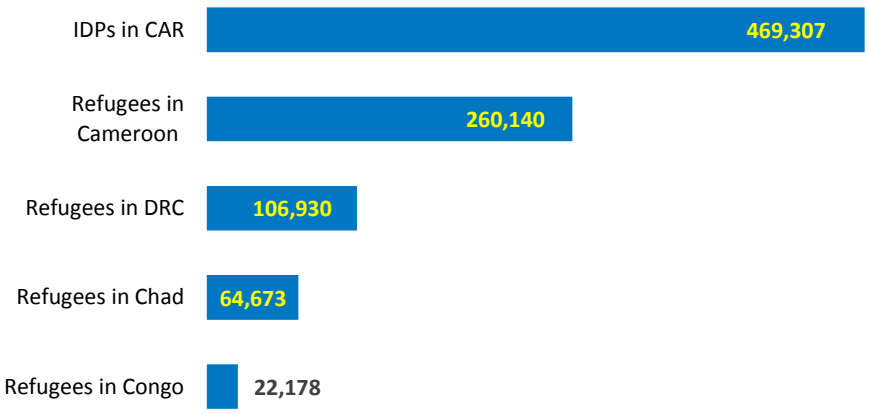
PRIORITIES

- **CAR**: Continue to provide protection and assistance to displaced populations; ensure protection monitoring in accessible areas.
- **Cameroon**: Strengthen the WASH response in all refugee sites.
- **Chad:** Strengthen community-based protection, particularly for persons with specific needs.
- **DRC**: Address the needs of newly arrived refugees, especially in the area of shelter.
- **RoC**: Ensure registration and documentation of all CAR refugees.

HIGHLIGHTS

- UNHCR facilitated the participation of Central African refugees hosted in Chad, Cameroon and the Republic of Congo in the constitutional referendum and presidential elections that took place in December.
- Out of 54,264 refugees who registered for the vote in the three countries of asylum, almost 61 per cent cast their vote with no major security incident reported.
- In the Central African Republic (CAR), persistent localised clashes and the prevailing insecurity countrywide triggered additional population displacement. At the same time, recurrent attacks on humanitarian organisations and convoys continued to impede access to affected areas inside the CAR and contributed to slowing down the humanitarian response.
- Humanitarian needs for the CAR situation continued to surpass available resources, directly impacting UNHCR's ability to provide protection and assistance to displaced populations.

923,228 persons of concern

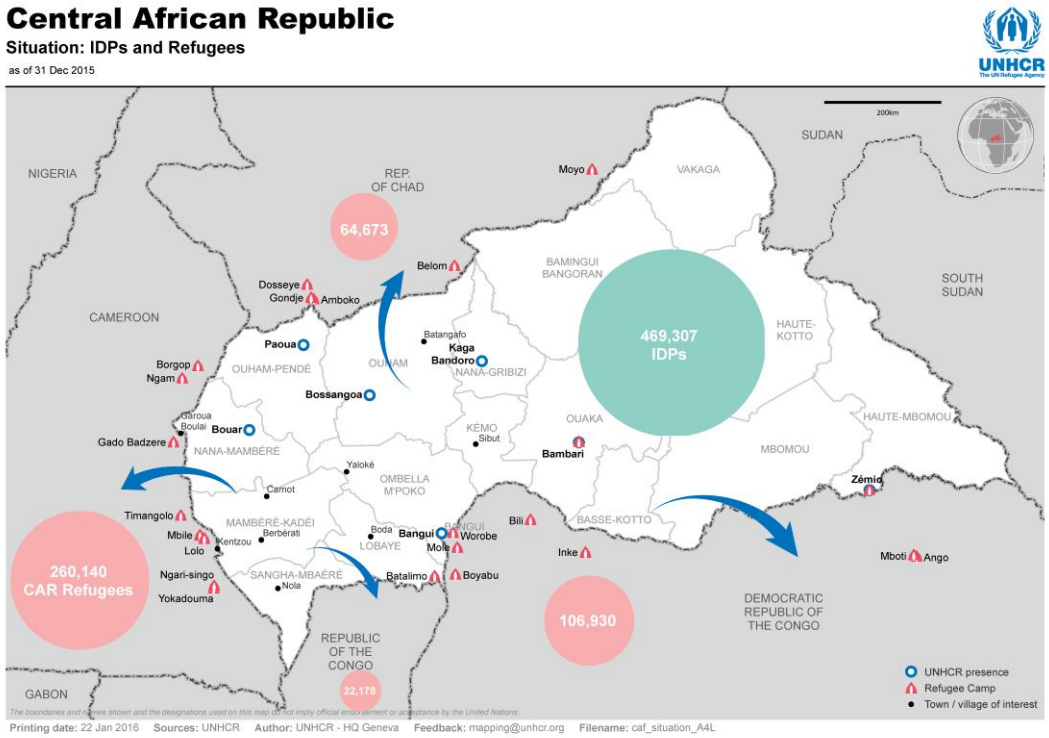


Central African refugees voting in their presidential election in Mbilé site, east Cameroon. © UNHCR/G. Kemzang

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Operational Context

Overview. Since the most recent outbreak of violence in in the Central African Republic (CAR) in September 2015, that left an estimated 75,000 people displaced, attacks by armed groups present increased during the reporting period, targeting civilians, including displaced people. These attacks and the prevailing insecurity across the country continue to provoke population displacement at large scale. New waves of displacement were reported in conflict-affected areas of the country, where limited resources are already overstretched and the protracted restrictions on humanitarian access strain local capacities to meet the needs of a growing vulnerable internally-displaced population. In addition, minority groups continue to be trapped in various enclaves countrywide. As at the end of December, close to a million Central Africans, i.e. a quarter of the population remained, forcibly displaced inside CAR and in neighbouring countries.



Elections. Presidential elections in CAR, scheduled for 27 December, were postponed to 30 December due to logistical and access challen-ges. Refugees in Cameron, the Republic of the Congo and Chad were able to vote thanks to the support of the CAR Transitional Government, the Governments of host countries and the advocacy work of UNHCR. As usual when facilitating refu-gee participation in elections, UNHCR's role in countries of asylum was strictly a-political. The agency informed refugees about the electoral process, facilitated their participation and helped ensure the voluntary nature of the electoral process in a safe environment. When checking the voters' lists, some refugees found they were not listed by the Nation Election Authority, a Central African organization in charge of elections. Nevertheless, all refugees eligible to do so were allowed to vote. Despite these relatively minor setbacks, thousands of Central African refugees successfully exercised their right to vote. Overall, out of 54,264 refugees (33,366 in Cameroon, 13,793 in Chad and 7,105 in the Republic of the Congo) who registered to vote, almost 61 per cent cast their vote with no major security incidents reported.

2016 Plans. UNHCR, in close collaboration with government counterparts and partners, will continue to provide multi-sectoral assistance and durable solutions to internally displaced populations and refugees affected by the crisis in CAR. The possible impact of the ongoing election process on assistance needs of people of concern will be closely monitored. In this regard, should elections run smoothly and result in a stable situation in the country, it is foreseen that 200,000 to 250,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) will return to their places of origin over the next 12 months. Furthermore, in line with the 2016 Regional Refugee Response Plan, some 50,000 refugees are also expected to return from asylum countries, mostly spontaneously, with facilitated repatriation only foreseen towards the end of 2016 if the situation permits. The main challenge foreseen for the returnees is related to access to their former land and property, which will be a concern especially given the continued absence of law and order enforcement capacities in CAR. Hopefully this situation may be remedied by local authorities at least in the initial months of the year.

Protection

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

- **Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps.** Several incidents of attacks against civilians were reported in different prefectures in the north and central part of the country such as in Nana-Gribizi, Ouham, Nana-Mambéré, and Uham-Pendé. Particularly worrying are reports of assaults in IDP camps at night, particularly in Ngakobo, Galabourouma, Batangafo, which resulted in violence against women and children, separation of families, property damage and looting, and loss of livelihoods. The situation of more than 36,000 people, whose right to freedom of movement is being violated in seven enclaves continued to be of particular concern. In this regard, in the PK5 district in Bangui, the only location in the capital city still hosting Muslim communities, the September clashes have plunged 26,000 people living in the enclave into a situation of forced confinement, setting back limited progress in the freedom of movement observed before the outbursts of violence. Despite the presence of UN peacekeepers, the district is heavily surrounded by armed gangs and militia who prevent the population to come and go freely and in safety, earn a living, or visit the market. They have been living under siege for the past two years. The protection cluster continued to advocate for greater freedom of movement of people in enclaves as forced encampment constitutes a violation of human rights.

CAMEROON

- **Achievements and Impact.** The biometric verification exercise was launched on 14 December in Yaoundé and is on-going at year's end. In preparation to conduct the exercise in Douala, expected to start in Douala during the first half of January 2016, UNHCR conducted extensive advocacy and community mobilization activities amongst the refugee population. The process should be implemented in all sites and locations hosting refugees over a period of eight months.

A Central African refugee votes in Gore, southern Chad. ©UNHCR/ S. Ndabazerutze

CHAD

Achievements and Impact

- A biometric registration of Central African refugees living in host villages located in in the southern part of the country (Department of Barh Sara) revealed a reduction of 10 per cent of the refugee population and currently stands at approximately 5,370. It is believed that the absentees may have returned to the Central African Republic. At the same time, from 20 November to 31 December, UNHCR registered 224 new arrivals (44 families).
- In an effort to develop a plan for the inclusion of people living with disability into programmatic considerations, UNHCR, in partnership with local authorities, facilitated a three-day workshop in the city of Gore, targeting refugees living with disabilities from Doholo and Gondje camps. People with disabilities are specifically vulnerable to physical, sexual and emotional abuse and may require additional protection. The lack of privacy in some situations, such as a lack of access to latrines and bathing areas, increases the risk of abuse. In addition, they are very often isolated from community life; they risk being left behind when those around them flee and may face difficulties accessing family tracing programmes.

REPUBLIC OF CONGO

- **Achievements and Impact.** From 25 November to 10 December, more than 8,000 Central African refugees and members of the local population took part in the country-wide *16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence* campaign. Various training sessions were conducted on leadership and advocacy, resulting in the strengthening of opinion leaders' capacities to deal with harmful practices against women. In addition, awareness-raising activities were conducted through the distribution of gadgets, film showings, and educational talks in primary schools, local markets and factories.

Education

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

- **Achievements and Impact.** During the reporting period, UNHCR continued to organise awareness-raising workshops to boost school enrolment, such as in Inke refugee camp where a specific focus was placed on girls. Furthermore, in order to improve access to quality education, a new primary school opened in Bili refugee camp, hosting 560 children (352 boys and 208 girls) as at the end of December. With the second school already running in the camp, monitoring shows a high level of school enrollment, reaching more than 90 percent among refugee pupils. Out of 1,089 students enrolled in the two schools of the camp, 61 percent successfully passed their exams for the first semester.

REPUBLIC OF CONGO

- **Achievements and Impact.** Through its partner African Initiatives for Relief and Development (AIRD), UNHCR finalized the construction of a training centre in Ikpembélé where refugees and members of the host community in Betou will have access to training programmes on sewing, embroidery and carpentry. The centre will be operational shortly.

Health

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- **Achievements and Impact.** Primary health care continued to be provided in health centres in each refugee camp, except in Amboko and Gondje where refugees use the health centre of Beureuh, serving both local and refugees communities. All health centres are equipped with qualified personnel. Over the reporting period, more than 31,000 medical consultations were carried out of which over 43 percent for children aged 0-5 years. The predominant diseases remained acute respiratory infections and malaria. As part of various immunization and vaccination campaigns, 416 children were immunized against measles while 18,359 others were vaccinated against poliomyelitis.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

- **Achievements and Impact** In the refugee hosting area of Boyabu, sensitization campaigns to promote the fight against HIV and sexually-transmitted diseases have been conducted by UNHCR's partners *Association pour le Developpement Economique et Social* (ADES) and *Relais Communautaires* (with the distribution of more than 5,000 condoms). Additional awareness campaigns were carried out on alcohol and drug abuse.
- **Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps.** In Bili refugee camp, the lack of medical screening capacity and assistance increases the risk of mother-to-child transmission of HIV. UNHCR's health partner ADES is in contact with both *Programme National de Lutte contre le Sida* (PNLS) and *Programme Nationale Multisectoriel de Lutte contre le Sida* (PNMLS) in search of solutions. In the refugee hosting area of Inke, essential anti-malarial drugs are lacking and were ordered from Kinshasa.

Food Security and Nutrition

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

- **Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps.** In December, critical funding shortfalls have forced WFP to reduce its food assistance by 20 per cent in camps hosting CAR refugees by cutting the provision of in-kind food and cash & voucher assistance. This reduction will be maintained in 2016 unless WFP receives new contributions. These cuts are being implemented while severe cases of malnutrition have been reported in Boyabu and Mboti over the reporting period.

Water and Sanitation

CAMEROON

- **Achievements and Impact.** As part of the 2015 water and sanitation response, 116 boreholes, 3,524 latrines and 2,605 showers were built in all refugee sites, including 88 drills, 2,646 latrines and 2012 showers by UNHCR, 19 boreholes, 850 latrines and 465 showers by UNICEF, 4 wells, 28 latrines and 28 showers by Plan Cameroon and 5 boreholes by Solidarite

International. These facilities have contributed to achieve an average ratio of 19 liters of water per person per day, 21 people per latrine and 26 people per shower – all above UNHCR emergency standards.

- **Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps.** 12 boreholes, 1,692 latrines and 2,739 additional showers remain to be built to meet the needs of refugees on all sites. The needs for the construction 305 boreholes and 828 latrines in host villages are uncovered.

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- **Achievements and Impact.** Refugees had access to potable water in sufficient quantity and quality with an average of 31 litres per person per day the camps and 21 litres per person per day in host villages that is beyond the recommended standard of 15 litres per person per day. Water infrastructure was well maintained by water point management committees who were trained to repair boreholes with needed spare parts acquired through a cost recovery method.

Shelter, Non-Food Items and Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM)

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

- **Achievements and Impact.** In response to new displacement created by the upsurge of violence that continued in November and December, UNHCR continued to provide assistance to IDPs through the provision of shelter and distribution of non-food items (kitchen sets, plastic mats, jerry cans, blankets and buckets). During the reporting period, UNHCR assisted nearly 650 IDPs in Bouar, 7,200 in Kaga Bandoro, 1,400 in Bambari and approximately 20,000 in Bangui. Overall, in 2015, more than 130,000 IDPs were provided with assistance in shelter and more than 193,000 with assistance in non-food items.
- **Needs and Remaining Gaps.** With a population of 30,000 people in Batangafo, a contingency stock is required in this location. The construction of warehouses to preposition assistance is also required in localities affected by violence (so-called 'hotspots') and hosting large groups of displaced persons, knowing that the access routes are often problematic.

CAMEROON

- **Achievements and Impact.** In order to improve the living conditions of refugees, UNHCR through its partners began the construction of durable and semi-durable shelters in the refugee sites of Gado, Borgop, Lolo, Mbile, Timangolo. Thus far, 2,051 shelter were constructed, representing 88 per cent of the target. Additional shelter constructions are being planned in 2016, including community infrastructure.

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- **Achievements and Impact.** A total of 66 shelters were rehabilitated in Belom and Doholo refugee camps to accommodate new arrivals. Construction of four out-of-camp school facilities in the villages of Dembo, Guidikouti, Doholo and Timberi were completed and will be operational by the second quarter of 2016 while the construction of a health center in Doholo refugee camp was ongoing as at the end of December. This programme aims to accommodate both refugees and host communities' needs.

REPUBLIC OF CONGO

- **Achievements and Impact.** As part of the 2015 response, UNHCR built 254 new shelters at the *15 Avril* site. In Ikpengbele, 100 shelters are under construction to replace old ones.

Durable Solutions

CHAD

- **Achievements and Impact**. Since July 2015, UNHCR has been conducting a profiling exercise of refugee households in search for durable solutions in Gore and Maro. A total of 2,376 people (523 households) have been profiled with 52 per cent of them indicating a preference for voluntary repatriation, 44 per cent for resettlement and 4 per cent either for local integration or remaining undecided. During the reporting period, 22 cases of 78 CAR refugees in Gore have been successfully resettled in Canada and the United States.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Humanitarian needs for the situation in CAR continue to surpass available resources. While donor generosity has allowed UNHCR to continue scaling up its operations in line with the growing needs, its operations inside CAR and neighbouring countries continue to face critical funding shortfalls to cover its operations in December and into 2016. **UNHCR's 2015 financial requirements for the CAR regional crisis amounted to USD 241 million**, including USD 186 million for the response in asylum countries. **The overall needs were covered at 24 per cent only.**

CONSEQUENCES OF UNDERFUNDING

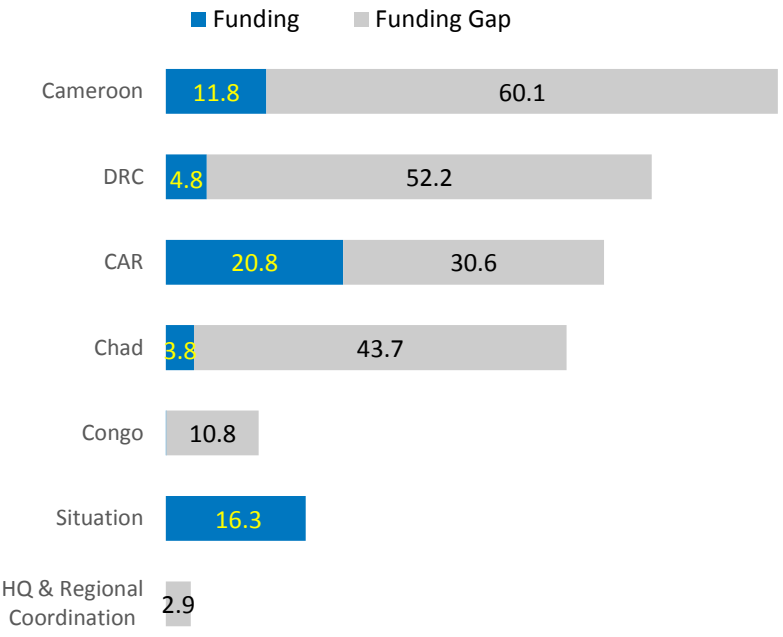
Without additional donor contributions, UNHCR will be required to further limit the number of people supported with essential protection and humanitarian assistance and, in some cases, cease some of its programmes such as alphabetization activities in Boyabu refugee camp in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Lack of funds also means that UNHCR cannot conduct assessment missions to remote areas where Central African refugees have arrived in DRC, nor ensure that refugees are transferred from insecure areas at the border to refugee sites/camps. The reductions are likely to increase the tensions that exist between Central African refugees and host populations. Meanwhile, host countries will be forced to carry an even higher burden, compromising their capacity to cope with the crisis.

Donors:

African Development Bank
Denmark
DRC Pooled Fund
European Union
France
Finland
Germany
Holy See
Japan
Italy
Luxembourg
Private donors Australia, Canada, Germany, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Switzerland, USA)
Radiohjälpen
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
United States of America
UN CERF
UN Development Programme
UN Foundation
UN Population Fund
UN Programme on HIV/AIDS
United Kingdom

Funding:

A total of USD 57.3 million has been funded



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