

# Central African Republic Situation

December 2017 – January 2018

The displacement and protection situation in the Central African Republic and in the sub-region remains deeply troubling. Since December 2017, **fighting has erupted in the northwest of the country**, triggering large movements of people towards the town of Paoua and into southern Chad. This has led to the displacement of a record number of Central Africans, bringing to **543,000 the total number of refugees** hosted in neighbouring countries and close to **694,000 civilians displaced internally** as at the end of January 2018. This figure represents the **highest level of displacement since the start of the crisis in 2013**. UNHCR's focus remains on **life-saving protection and assistance**, among them the distribution of basic relief items to displaced persons and shelters. Delay in return over the next months will affect the planting season, which may lead to food shortages later in the year. The 2018 CAR Humanitarian Response Plan estimates that more than half of the Central African population needs emergency humanitarian assistance, however, due to access constraints only 41 per cent of the population will be reached.

## KEY FIGURES

# 543,826

CAR refugees in the sub-region (as at 31 January, 2018)

# 47,735

Central African refugees who have spontaneously returned to CAR (in 2017)

# 693,932

IDPs in CAR (as at 31 January, 2018)

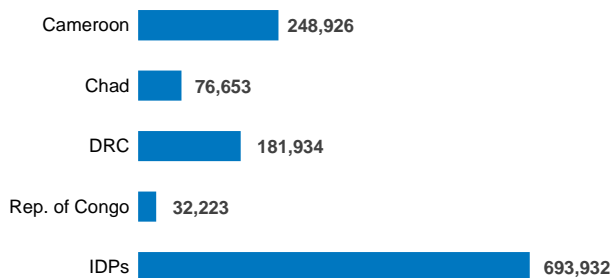
Source: *Commission Mouvement de Populations*

## HIGHLIGHTS

- In the **Central African Republic**, UNHCR has started responding to the urgent and increasing protection needs of an estimated 65,000 new IDPs in the north-west town of Paoua.
- In **Cameroon**, the screening and registration exercise for the 489 new arrivals between December 2017 and January 2018 has been completed. In addition, 314 refugees were registered in UNHCR's Biometric Identification Management System in Batouri and 206 refugees in Bertoua.
- In **Chad**, 18,256 new refugees have arrived in southern Chad between December 2017 and January 2018. UNHCR has started registering them in addition to distributing core relief items and emergency shelters as well as providing immediate medical assistance.
- In the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, the biometric registration for Central African refugees living outside camps in Nord-Ubangi Province was finalised in December 2017, allowing the identification of 39,150 individuals. Also, UNHCR and WFP provided assistance in cash to cover new arrivals' food needs, targeting close to 21,000 refugees and 7,000 host families.
- In the **Republic of Congo**, from December 2017 to January 2018, 215 new arrivals were registered; 97 refugees in the Likouala Department and 118 refugees in Brazzaville.

## POPULATION OF CONCERN\* (as at 31 January, 2018)

### Countries



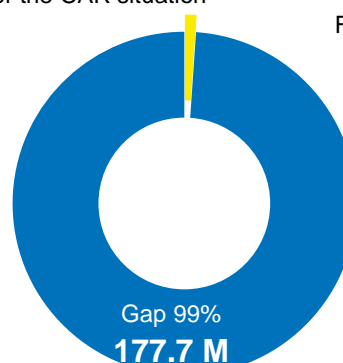
\* Smaller numbers of CAR refugees are also in Sudan (2,221 as at 31 October 2017) and South Sudan (1,869 as at 31 January 2018).

## FUNDING FOR 2018 (as at 31 January, 2018)

# USD 180.1 M

requested for the CAR situation

Funded 1%  
**2.4 M**



## Operational Context

- Since December 2017, an acute crisis has developed in the northwest of CAR. The town of Paoua, close to the border with Chad, has received a large number of IDPs, as families fled from armed groups that have been terrorising villages in the surrounding areas (communes of Bah-Bessar, Mia-Pende and Nana-Barya). These movements increased significantly at the end of December 2017. Although the local population has welcomed the new arrivals, host families have been overwhelmed and their capacity to support the displaced has been surpassed. Local authorities report that as of 23 January 2018 some 15,000 houses had been burned and 487 people killed. The fighting has displaced more than 65,000 people who are now seeking refuge in Paoua, which previously had only 40,000 inhabitants. The region of Paoua was relatively spared from the fighting and escalation of violence throughout 2017. Further north, near the Chadian border, the town of Markounda has also been engulfed in violence since the end of December. The insecurity has restricted access and thus far, no humanitarian assistance has been able to reach Markounda. By the end of January 2018, the number of IDPs in CAR had increased to 693,932 people, an increase of over 60 percent compared to the year before.
- The surge in violence in the northwest has forced over 18,200 Central Africans to flee to Chad, making this the biggest influx of Central African refugees to Chad since 2014. An unknown number of people have sought refuge in the bush. Currently, more than 540,000 Central African refugees live in neighbouring countries, the majority of whom live in Cameroon, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the Republic of Congo.
- The security situation in CAR outside of the capital, Bangui, remains dire. Various armed groups still effectively control large swathes of territory and continue to establish illegal parallel administration and taxation structures in areas under their control. Conditions such as security and access to essential services for a safe and dignified return have yet to be met in many areas, signalling the possibility of a protracted displacement. Furthermore, armed groups continue to target humanitarian workers and MINUSCA peacekeepers, which resulted in the death of 14 peacekeepers in 2017. This situation severely constrains UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations' access and protection provided to the population in the affected areas.
- The humanitarian response to the IDP and refugee situation in CAR is among the least funded emergencies in the world. In 2017, UNHCR appealed for US\$209.2 million for the CAR situation of which only 12 percent was received, barely more than a dollar for every 10 required. In 2018, UNHCR estimates the funding for the CAR situation to be US\$180.1 million. Resource mobilisation for the Central African crisis is becoming increasingly difficult.



*Pre-registration in Bekoninga near Goré, Chad, where thousands of refugees have arrived since December 2017 following a surge in violence in the northwest of the Central African Republic ©UNHCR/A. Ngargoune*

## Country Updates

### CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

- In response to the recent displacement in Paoua, a mechanism to monitor population movements and register displaced individuals has been established. UNHCR has been distributing non-food items to IDPs. As at the end of January 2018, UNHCR had distributed household kits to 2,070 individuals in Paoua. In addition, the Danish Refugee Council, UNHCR partner, and IOM have worked on the construction of 18 communal emergency shelters in areas with high displaced population density in Paoua. Host families have been consulted in order to get their agreement on the construction of family shelters in their areas and to improve hosts' living conditions.
- In preparation for the repatriation of 650 Central African refugees from the Republic of Congo, UNHCR has updated the profiles of municipalities located in Lobaye, western CAR, where the refugees could potentially return. Field teams undertook two missions in January to identify a transit centre in Mougoumba and verify the state of the roads in the area. UNHCR also informed local authorities about the ongoing process and gathered the views of the local population who approved of the return of the refugees. An estimated 47,735 Central African refugees in neighbouring countries spontaneously returned to the country during 2017. UNHCR tracks return movements both through its network of partners, regular missions to high-return areas, and through the sharing of trends and information between its operations in neighbouring countries.
- In January 2018, all former inhabitants of the 32 IDP sites in the capital, Bangui, returned to their homes. The return and reintegration operations conducted in Bangui and Bimbo in 2017 will be replicated in other parts of the country this year. Over the course of 2017, 88,365 IDPs successfully returned to their homes. Many did so through the invaluable support of the *Projet d'Appui au Retour et à la Réintégration* (PARET), a government agency supported by UNHCR and working under the Ministry of Humanitarian Action and National Reconciliation.
- The humanitarian community in CAR is considering the feasibility of initiating recovery projects alongside emergency responses in places where the potential for doing so exists, especially where the spontaneous return of displaced people is ongoing. In such areas, it is vital that humanitarian actors work to create conditions conducive to the return of displaced populations to their homes in safety and dignity. Key to this will be support to both state and traditional leadership structures, enhancing dispute resolution mechanisms, and strengthening peaceful coexistence between communities.
- UNHCR is also supporting the Government of CAR in its efforts to translate the Kampala Convention on the protection and assistance of IDPs into domestic law.

### CAMEROON

- Triggered by reports of population movements, a protection monitoring mission carried out in December 2017 revealed the arrival of 489 refugees (189 households) in the area of Bombé Château in the commune of Kentzou. Most of the new arrivals said they had been in the country for at least a month. In addition, 314 refugees in Batouri were registered in UNHCR's Biometric Identification Management System and 206 refugees in Bertoua. Some 180 asylum seekers were registered in the towns of Meiganga, Mbonga and Gandong. Also, in Djohong, 95 birth certificates files were submitted for court judgment. Some 95 birth certificates were issued and 45 collected by parents.
- In Batouri, a capacity-building workshop on international protection was conducted for administrative authorities on 8 December 2017. The Boumba-et-Ngoko Department hosts more than 5,000 Central African refugees, including 1,094 in the site of Ngarisingo. Participants included officials from the security forces, defence forces and the judiciary. The local authorities raised questions focusing on the prospects of durable solutions for Central African refugees and the sustainability of food assistance to refugees in light of declining food aid.
- WFP and UNHCR developed a targeting strategy for assistance to CAR refugees, to inform the identification of the most vulnerable refugees to be assisted in 2018. The strategy is based on socio-economic vulnerability, and WFP and UNHCR technical units from the respective headquarters along with representatives from ECHO and DFID, supported the process.

## CHAD

- In response to the influx of over 18,200 CAR refugees who have arrived in southern Chad, the pre-registration process in camps has been completed (Level 1 registration completed in Mbaibokoum, Nya Pende and Barh Sara Prefectures) and reception sites have been identified in the sous Prefecture of Bessao. UNHCR has started providing assistance including core relief items for 18,000 refugees and immediate medical check-ups. WFP distributed food-vouchers to some 18,100 refugees and UNICEF delivered 8,000 jerry cans. The evaluation of the water and sanitation infrastructure available in the host villages also started.
- The humanitarian situation is worrying in host villages. There is an urgent need for shelter, food, drinking water, health, education and care arrangements for children. More than 40 host villages are currently overwhelmed due to food shortages and rising prices. An increasing number of Central African refugees and Chadians in host communities are food insecure. Furthermore, there is a risk that inter-communal tensions among the refugee population could spill over into the area, in particular in Kaba-Roangar, and there are reports of tensions between the refugees and host communities in Bekoninga. The relocation operation from Bekoninga to Doholo camp is ongoing.

## DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

- Central African refugees continued to arrive in North Ubangi and in Bas-Uele provinces. The biometric registration of 39,150 Central African refugees in North Ubangi province, which started in October 2017, was completed on 8 December 2017. In Bas-Uele Province, 37,108 new arrivals have been pre-registered and another 11,049 have been registered by the National Commission for Refugees as of 31 December 2017. Biometric registration in Bas-Uele Province is scheduled for the first half of 2018, as soon as the road rehabilitation is completed.
- From 4 to 9 December 2017, UNHCR and WFP distributed cash assistance to new arrivals, targeting close to 21,000 refugees and 7,000 host families. UNHCR and WFP also completed a joint assessment mission (JAM) in the four existing sites in South and North Ubangi to define criteria for a targeted approach in food assistance. The targeting in existing camps was one of the recommendations of the last JAM exercise that was agreed by both agencies to develop off-site livelihood activities and free up limited resources to assist new refugees in other areas of the ex-Equateur region.
- In Bas-Uele Province, UNHCR's partner *Terre sans Frontières* started the construction works for the rehabilitation of a health post of Kazawi, in Bondo territory. This area has a high concentration of new arrivals from CAR. The host community contributed to the works, providing construction materials. The partner also completed 390 shelters (out of 418 planned) for new arrivals in the localities of Monga, Ndu and Kanzawi. Also, UNHCR's partner AIRD completed 261 additional transitional shelters (out of 368 planned) in order to accommodate new arrivals in Inke camp, as well as 269 latrines (out of 368 planned). In Ndu village, local authorities granted plots of land to agricultural associations of newly arrived refugees and host community members to enable them to carry out agricultural activities. In late December 2017, UNHCR opened a new office in Monga in order to assist CAR refugees in this remote area. In the four camps in the provinces of North and South Ubangi, UNHCR's partners constructed 683 latrines (out of 683 planned) and 880 transitional shelters (out of 900 planned) using cash-based interventions.

## REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

- From December 2017 to January 2018, 215 new arrivals were registered; 97 refugees in the Likouala Department and 118 refugees in Brazzaville.
- About 650 Central Africans refugees hosted in the Republic of the Congo have recently expressed their wish to return to CAR. Through an exchange of letters, UNHCR will facilitate the return process which is likely to take place early in 2018. This repatriation, however, does not imply a change in UNHCR's position, which is not to promote large-scale voluntary repatriation of Central Africans in the sub-region considering the volatile security situation still prevailing in many areas of return. A cross border meeting was organized on 10 December 2017 with UNHCR to prepare the repatriation of these refugees, which is likely to take place in March 2018.
- WFP assisted 12,630 CAR refugees in the Likouala Department by providing them with cash-based transfers for food assistance. 6,150 refugees were assisted through direct food distribution.

## Financial Information

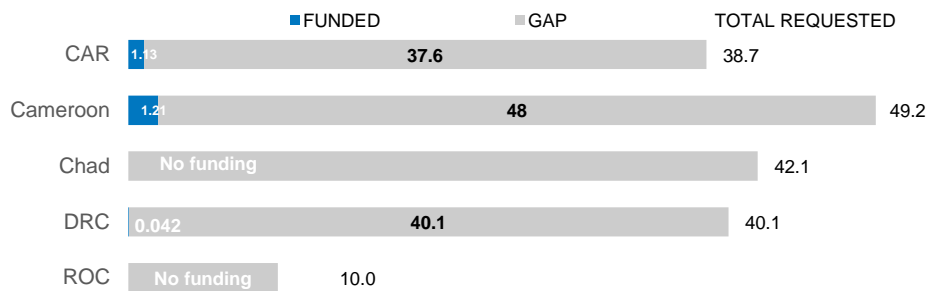
In 2018, UNHCR's requirements amounts to \$180.1 million to meet the immediate humanitarian needs of people of concern in the Central African Republic and for the refugee response in asylum countries. UNHCR is very grateful for the financial support provided by donors who have contributed to these activities with unearmarked and broadly earmarked funds as well as for those who have contributed directly to the operation.

### Donors who have contributed to the operation:

- Germany
- United Kingdom
- Vodafone Foundation

### Funding (in million USD)

A total of **\$2.4 million** has been funded



### Special thanks to the major donors of unrestricted and regional funds in 2018

Sweden (98 M) | Norway (43 M) | Netherlands (39 M) | United Kingdom (32 M) | Denmark (25 M) | Australia (19 M) | Switzerland (15 M)

### Thanks to other donors of unrestricted and regional funds in 2018

Algeria | Bosnia and Herzegovina | Canada | China | Estonia | Finland | Indonesia | Kuwait | Lithuania | Luxembourg | Monaco | Montenegro | New Zealand | Qatar | Republic of Korea | Russian Federation | Serbia | Singapore | Sri Lanka | Thailand | Turkey | UN Peacebuilding Fund | United Arab Emirates | Uruguay | Private Donor

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as of end January 2018 or latest figures available

