

UNHCR response to the emergency situation in northern Democratic Republic of the Congo

February 2022

Key figures

212,693

Central African Refugees are currently living in the DRC

15,475

Refugees relocated to Modale, Sidi and Nzakara (Nord-Ubangi) Wenze (Sub-Ubangi) development hubs since May 2021

15,360

Refugee identity cards distributed in North Ubangi, South Ubangi and Bas Uele Provinces from May until now

Highlights

After improving infrastructure and doing a community awareness raising campaign, **UNHCR relaunched relocations to the Modale development hub (North Ubangi)**, with 815 refugees relocated from the area of Gomba.

On 21 February, UNHCR inaugurated a fully **equipped health centre and six classrooms in Modale, North Ubangi province**, at the presence of UNHCR DRC's Representative and the North Ubangi Vice-Governor.

In South Ubangi province, **700 refugees living with special needs in Wenze** development hub, South Ubangi received **cash assistance** from UNHCR.



UNHCR DRC Representative Ms Liz Ahua and Oscar Oshobale, Vice Governor of North Ubangi Province visit the newly inaugurated classrooms in Modale development hub © Claris Achu

Operational Context

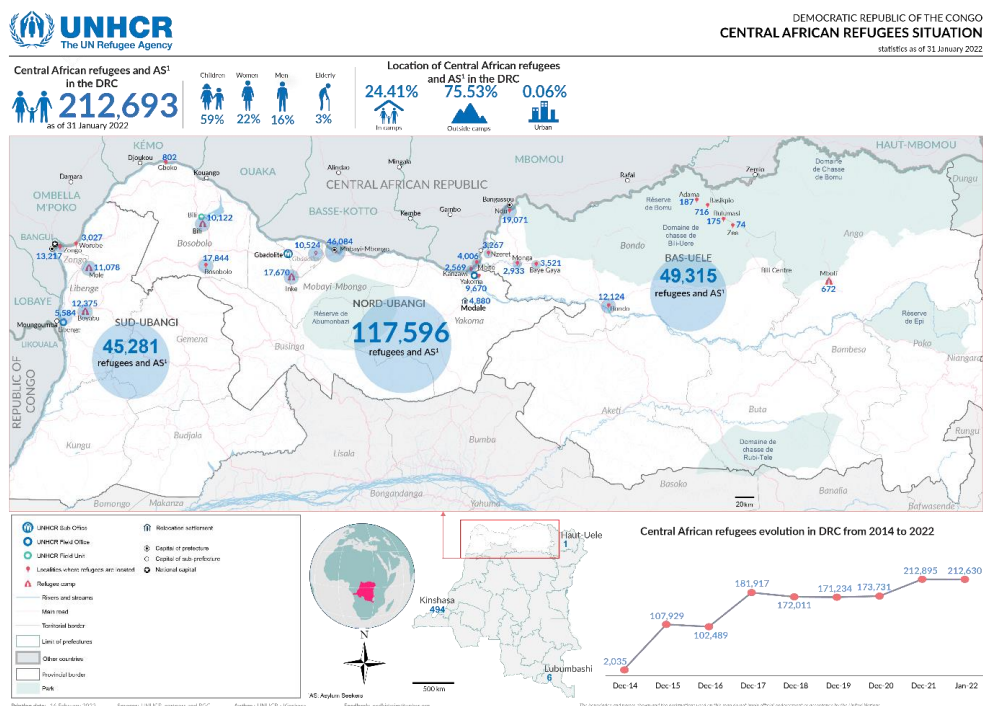
After the political upheaval and violence following December 2020 Presidential elections, progress towards stabilisation in the CAR continues slowly. According to UN officials, long awaited regional and senatorial elections scheduled for September 2022 are expected to support the decentralization of power and to stabilise the country's political climate. The unilateral ceasefire announced by President Touadera in October 2021 is still in place and opposition parties agreed in February to return to a national dialogue. Military forces and their allies continue to pursue operations to regain the control over CAR territory and clashes with armed groups are still ongoing in some parts of the country.

Between January and June 2021, UNHCR DRC and the National Commission for refugee (CNR) carried out biometric registration of 73,645 new arrivals in the three northern provinces of North Ubangi, South Ubangi and Bas Uele, resulting in a total of 212,693 CAR refugees entering the DRC since the first influx in 2013. A mechanism for continuous registration has been set up to monitor small groups of new arrivals fleeing ethnic-related disputes or the operations by CAR government forces.

About 24 per cent of all CAR refugees live in four camps, while the rest are scattered across remote and hard-to-reach border villages. A majority of them are women, children and elderly persons, sometimes living with already impoverished host families in overcrowded or makeshift shelters. These locations, along the Ubangi River that separates the CAR from the DRC and extremely hard to reach because of extremely degraded or non-existent roads and the presence of armed groups, (including elements of the Ugandan armed group The Lord's Resistance Army in Bas Uele).

CAR REFUGEE POPULATION IN THE DRC

In November 2021 and in January 2022, North Ubangi authorities reported two influxes of an estimated 41,832 asylum seekers in Bosobolo Territory and 3,090 individuals in Limasa, some 65 kilometres from Yakoma centre. Assessments by UNHCR suggest that these are small preventive population movements resulting from the current military operations in CAR, as well as spontaneous returns and pendular movements. UNHCR continue to observe the situation to ascertain the need for biometric registration.



I. PROTECTION NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

As humanitarian actors struggle to access the vast and remote border localities in which the majority of new refugees have spontaneously settled, CAR refugees continue to face multiple challenges. Security incidents are still reported in some areas and continue to pose protection risks. Other pressing needs include:

- Insufficient quantities of essential household items that cannot cover the needs of all refugees and asylum-seekers, especially those living outside the camps.
- Dire need for further shelter assistance, both in the new development hubs and in the spontaneous sites in border localities along the Ubangi River.
- Drinking water remains insufficient in out-of-camp areas, including in the new development hubs in North and South Ubangi provinces, with some refugees being dependent on river sources with increase exposure to water borne diseases.
- Inadequate access to quality healthcare: existing health structures in locations hosting refugees are understaffed, poorly equipped and often lack essential drugs for prevalent diseases such as malaria. At this time UNHCR is limited to supporting health facilities within refugee camps and 12 out-of-camp health facilities because of insufficient funds.
- In development hubs and out-of-camp areas, more sanitary and hygiene facilities such as latrines and showers are urgently needed to prevent the spread of diseases and protect refugee women and girls from gender-based violence (GBV).
- Constant supplies of nutrition supplements and therapeutic foods are needed to address the increasing levels of acute malnutrition among refugee children. In 2021, UNHCR partner AIDES identified 1,659 cases of acute malnutrition amongst CAR refugee children in out of camp refugee hosting locations in the three provinces.
- 593 cases of GBV have been documented amongst the old and new refugee caseload as of 28 February, amongst which are 416 cases of rape. Difficulties in providing emergency cash assistance and socio-cultural beliefs further exacerbate risks of GBV.
- There is urgent need for more hygiene kits to support women and girls of reproductive age. Such kits would enable them to practice good menstrual hygiene, reduce exposure to GBV, encourage regular school attendance amongst girls and allow them to fully participate in all aspects of social life.
- There is need for more financial resources to support the rehabilitation and development of community infrastructure as well as livelihood activities in the villages identified as development hubs to host CAR refugees, in line with UNHCR's Alternative to Camps policy.

II. MULTISECTORAL RESPONSE



PROTECTION

- As 31 February, 9,627 people relocated to three other development hubs in North and South Ubangi provinces, including 5,028 (1,024 households) in Wenze, 2,500 individuals in Nzakara and 2,099 persons (505 households) in Sidi. For the longer distance relocation to Modale development hub, UNHCR and partners assisted 5,848 refugees (1,605 households) with transport. In the development hubs refugees are receiving multisectoral assistance such as shelters, water and sanitation facilities, core relief items and livelihood support from UNHCR and its partners, which are also reinforcing and strengthening community infrastructures in these locations.
- In February, UNHCR and partners have started to collect intentions for voluntary returns in four camps and out-of-camps areas in North and South Ubangi provinces, ahead of the resumption of voluntary repatriations planned for 2022. About 9,713 persons have confirmed their intention to return CAR in 2022. UNHCR facilitated returns for 5,500 persons from Inke, Mole and Boyabu camps between October and December 2021.
- In North Ubangi, South Ubangi and Bas Uele provinces, AIDES carried out awareness raising sessions on GBV, reaching 1,029 CAR refugees and host community members in Monga, Kanzawi, Wenze, Mole and Boyabu camps.



EDUCATION

- In February UNHCR handed over six equipped classrooms and latrines to the Wele primary school, which hosting about 1,000 CAR refugee and Congolese students in Modale. Three other classrooms and three toilets were also handed over to the Mboma primary school in Elaka, South Ubangi.
- In February, AIDES facilitated the enrolment of 52 refugee children recently relocated from Gomba in primary and secondary schools in Modale, North Ubangi Province.
- UNHCR supported the payment of 52 community teachers in Modale, North Ubangi province, within the context of an Education Cannot Wait (ECW) funded project.
- To reinforce the quality of teaching, UNHCR partner ADSSE distributed 120 school manuals, 50 benches, 20 tables and 18 black boards in the Wenze primary school (South Ubangi) and 18 blackboards in Sidi primary school (North Ubangi).
- During the reporting period, ADSSE completed the renovation, construction and equipment of 12 classrooms to serve as Instant Network Schools (INS), funded by the Vodafone foundation in North and South Ubangi provinces. Already functional at Inke, Bili, Mole and Boyabu camps, Vodafone is extending the INS project to out of camp refugee hosting locations in Zongo, Bili, Gbadolite and Libenge, to ensure that both CAR refugee and Congolese children have unfettered access to online lessons and informatic classes, preparing them for exams and allowing them to access diversified and high-quality education in remote areas.



Yakatoa Sango teaches at the primary school of Wele, Modale. She is one of several teachers supported by the ECW-funded project © UNHCR/Clariss Achu



SHELTER AND CORE RELIEF ITEMS (CRIs)

- As of 28 February, AIRD has completed 1,717 emergency shelters in Modale development hub for the households relocated from Yakoma and Gomba, North Ubangi. In addition, 224 transitional shelters have been provided for persons with special needs, while 445 households have received the first instalment of cash for the construction semi-durable shelters.
- In Wenze, South Ubangi Province, AIRD has built 28 transitional shelters, while in Nzakara, North Ubangi, local authorities have granted authorization for the construction of 380 shelters, including 80 transitional shelters for persons with special needs.
- In February, UNHCR and ADSSE distributed solar lamps, soap and buckets to 815 refugees relocated from Gombe to Modale to facilitate their settlement, while 170 refugees self-relocated to Wenze, South Ubangi, received tarpaulins to build shelters.
- In Boyabu and Libenge, 45 persons at risk including separated and unaccompanied children received soap, blankets and buckets from ADSSE.
- UNHCR partner ADSSE distributed tricycles to CAR refugees with disabilities in Bili and Gbadolite, North Ubangi and in Mole and Wenze, South Ubangi province.



WATER AND SANITATION

- As of 28 February, UNHCR and partners have completed 361 blocks of community latrines and bathing rooms in Modale development hub, North Ubangi province.
- To promote good hygiene practices and prevent the spread of diseases, UNHCR distributed soap to 3,515 refugees in Boyabu camp, South Ubangi province.



HEALTH

- In February UNHCR and partner AIDES distributed essential drugs and nutrition supplies to health centres in the Inke, Bili, Mole and Boyabu camps. The distributions are continuing in 12 other health centres in the development hubs and other out-of-camp refugee hosting locations across the three provinces.

- Between January and February AIDES assisted 297 children admitted to malnutrition programmes in Mole, Bili, Boyabu and Inke camps, as well as in Modale development hub. An additional 55 children suffering from acute malnutrition in Wenze development hub were assisted with nutritious foods.

\$ CASH BASED INTERVENTIONS

- In South Ubangi province, UNHCR partner ADSSE distributed cash assistance to 700 individuals with special needs including 11 unaccompanied children in Wenze development hub.

🌱 LIVELIHOODS AND FOOD SECURITY

- In February, AIDES distributed market gardening kits comprising of hoes, watering cans and wheelbarrows to 120 households of CAR refugees and host community farmers in the Sidi and Nzakara development hubs (North Ubangi) 70 other households received fishing kits comprising of nets, hooks and ropes in Nzakara and Wenze (South Ubangi), while 40 animal farmers in Wenze also received goats. These farming and fishing kits will enable the beneficiaries to start off businesses that can increase household income and encourage self-sufficiency.
- To encourage self-sufficiency, 32 starts off kits for income generating activities were also distributed to 42 refugees and host community members in Mole camp, South Ubangi, following vocational training courses in food processing, market gardening, auto mechanics and woodworks organized by AIDES in partnership with the DRC national vocational training institute.
- In February, AIDES organized capacity building trainings for six savings and loans schemes association in in Mole, South Ubangi, while other members of an agropastoral cooperative from the same zone benefitted from similar training. Both structures were set up with the support of UNHCR to strengthen refugees and host communities' access to vital economic resources to fund income generating activities.
- In February, a mixed agropastoral cooperative in Mole camp, South Ubangi, completed the construction of a warehouse for agricultural products. UNHCR and AIDES supported the cooperative through the distribution of office equipment, and tools such as spades, wheelbarrows, metal buckets, furniture and solar lamps.



Distribution of farming and fishing kits to refugees and host communities in Nzakara, North Ubangi ©UNHCR/John Bogeme

IV. COORDINATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

UNHCR is coordinating and leading the refugee response in northern DRC in collaboration with the CNR, five implementing partners (ADSSE, AIDES, AIRD, ACTED, World vision and CIAUD, two new partners) and with other UN agencies (WFP, FAO and UNICEF), international and local NGOs (LIZADEEL, APEE).



COMITE INTERNATIONAL
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UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is grateful for the support of¹:

Donors for all UNHCR operations in DRC in 2022

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¹ Funding update as of 22 February 2022