

Central African Republic

01-31 May 2017

The centre, south, and east of the country plunged into violence with attacks against UN peacekeepers, displacement and refugee outflow

UNHCR and RRRM have provided urgent life-saving shelter and NFI assistance to **6,691 displaced households** in Bria, Haute-Kotto prefecture

The displacement of Fulani herders in Ndim is nearing an end. Some returns have taken place after months of efforts to ensure the population's safety

KEY INDICATORS

503,600

IDPs in CAR of whom **154,718** in sites and **348,882** in host families

20%

of IDPs in Bambari are ready to return to their areas of origin, according to a UNHCR return intention survey conducted this month

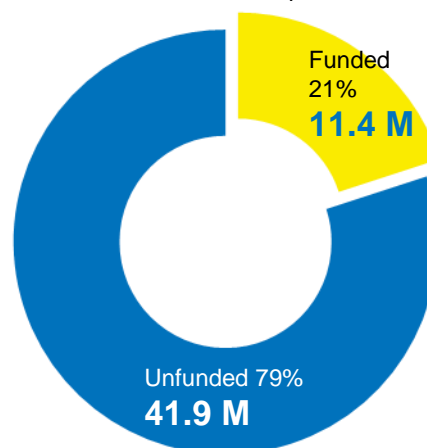
63,600

people were displaced by violence in the centre, south and east of the country during May

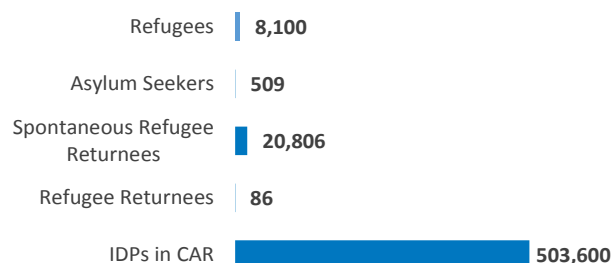
FUNDING (AS OF MAY 2017)

USD 53.3 M

requested for the Central African Republic



POPULATION OF CONCERN



Operational Context

The security situation significantly worsened across large swathes of the centre, south, and east of the country during the month. An emergency response was mounted as armed groups increased their activities. People pre-emptively fled their villages for other locations in CAR or in some cases sought refuge in neighbouring areas of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Central Sector

- On 9 May, Anti-Balaka elements attacked UPC troops in the town of Alindao. Reports indicated that the UPC, with its leader Ali Darrassa present in person, repelled the attack and that the Anti-Balaka subsequently withdrew along the road to Mingala. At least three people were killed and 11 injured in the incident. A reported 14,382 people sought shelter at the catholic mission. Some 329 houses in the town had been burnt down as of 18 May.
- On 18 May, clashes in Basse-Kotto spread through a number of villages in the sub-prefecture of Zangba, which neighbours Mobaye. Fierce fighting took place between Union pour La Paix Centrafricaine (UPC) and Anti-Balaka elements. This followed significant confrontations on 16 May in the village of Mboma on the road between Zamba and Alindao. The incident of 16 May reportedly claimed five lives and left six more injured. The villages of Banda-Koloyamba and Belengoa witnessed hostilities on 11 and 14 May respectively.

Western Sector

- There was a slight deterioration of the security situation in Nana Mambere during the reporting period. Of particular note, the town of Niem was occupied by the 3R armed group. After multiple cases of theft of cattle and the abduction of five herders by Anti-Balaka, the 3R group retaliated by besieging the town of Niem and demanding the release of Fulani hostages along with their cattle. The armed group's activities in Niem have led to numerous protection incidents including assassinations, displacement, and cases of arson.

Eastern Sector

- On 8 May, armed elements ambushed a MINUSCA convoy travelling through the village of Youngofongo between Bangassou and Rafai. The attack resulted in the deaths of five peacekeepers (four Cambodians and one Moroccan) and left another ten wounded (nine Moroccans and one Cambodian).
- On the night of 12 May, a group including Anti-Balaka elements attacked civilian populations in Bangassou, taking control of much of the town. The Tokoyo neighbourhood, home to a sizeable Muslim population, was subjected to the brunt of the attack. The nearby MINUSCA base also came under sustained heavy arms fire throughout the night and the following morning. During the exchange of fire, one Moroccan peacekeeper lost his life. MINUSCA reinforcements arrived in the area on

14 May in the form of a contingent of Portuguese troops previously stationed in Alindao. By 15 May, the MINUSCA contingent had regained control of the town. MINUSCA has reported that displaced civilians have fled to the Central Mosque, the Catholic Church and the MSF hospital.

- The situation in Bria, Haute Kotto prefecture, also worsened significantly during the month of May. Having already been the focus of fighting between armed groups in late 2016 and early 2017, the renewed violence provoked further fear amongst the civilian population. In response to the rising tensions, MINUSCA has strengthened its footing in the town, installing an additional check point near to an NGO base.
- The prevailing insecurity across the south and east of the country caused considerable anxiety amongst the Congolese refugee community in Zemio and led a small number to cross the river to the DRC. Once they had taken stock of the situation, they returned to the camp.
- On 22 May, a ceremony was held in Obo to mark the official departure of Ugandan and U.S. forces from the town. This followed several months of planning to enable Central African forces (FACA) to assume responsibility for the area.



Displaced people organise their belongings in Bangassou. Photo: UNHCR / Kenneth Chulley / 27 May 2017

Achievements

OPERATIONS

- The hostilities in Bria resulted in nearly 70 deaths and left more than one hundred wounded. More than 300 houses were also set on fire by armed groups, with the neighbourhood surrounding the city's airfield the worst affected. This was accompanied by widespread looting of houses and businesses. These atrocities caused massive displacement in the city, causing the spontaneous opening of four new displacement sites. Approximately 6,691 households (41,095 people) were identified as displaced in the town, of whom 1,063 households (8,014 people) were staying with hosting families.
- As part of a multi-cluster assistance plan, UNHCR has mobilised a stock of 1,500 NFI kits that were pre-positioned in Bambari, and a further 500 NFI kits departed Bangui on Thursday 25 May. The operation had already positioned 800 mats, 800 blankets, and 60 family tents at the MINUSCA base in Bria during the period of violence in late 2016 – this assistance now being distributed to the most vulnerable families by UNHCR's partner on the ground, COOPI. A protection mission comprised of two staff from Field Office Bambari has been providing support and guidance in Bria since Friday 26 May.
- The authorities allocated over 18 hectares of land in the PK3 area of Bria, near the MINUSCA base, for the accommodation of IDPs. This land is estimated as being sufficient for up to 5,000 households. A total of seven IDP-hosting areas were identified in the town. Responsibility for the registration of IDPs in these areas was divided between three different actors (COOPI, Esperance, and ACACD), with COOPI charged with compiling the results, providing figures and finalising distribution lists.
- Further southwards, the swell of violence in key towns along the axis running all the way from Bambari to Obo has seriously impacted UNHCR's supply route. Trucks containing materials for UNHCR Field Offices in Zemio and Obo were unable to move for several days during which they were kept secure at the MINUSCA base in Rafaï.



PROTECTION

Internally Displaced Persons

- As of the end of May, the number of IDPs in the country had climbed to 503,600, higher than it had been at any point during 2016 and 2017 and up from 440,000 just one month before. The large increase in the number of displaced is down to armed attacks causing populations to flee in Mbomou, Basse-Kotto, and Haute-Kotto, as well as pre-emptive displacement in Haute-Mbomou after rumours that armed groups were approaching Rafaï and Zemio.
- A Humanitarian Country Team meeting was urgently convened on Sunday 21 May to discuss the situation in Bria and to identify immediate needs. During this meeting, it was revealed that an estimated 39,319 individuals are displaced in the town. This

figure includes those staying in displacement sites as well as those staying with host families. As confirmed in earlier reports, the majority of those displaced are presently sheltering outside the MINUSCA base.

- As part of the fallout from the spread of violence across Mbomou, Basse-Kotto, and Haute-Kotto prefectures, Bambari received significant numbers of freshly-displaced families. As of 31 May, 159 households for 506 people from Alindao, Bokolobo, Mingala and Ngakobo had already been registered at the Sangaris and Alternatif sites in the town. According to latest estimates, the sites are receiving an average of 20 new households per day. While the first wave of arrivals consisted mainly of men walking on foot through the bush, these were followed by women and young children using local transport. Some 41 people with specific needs have been provided with emergency kits and additional support to help them settle into the site. Another group of arrivals were those who had been staying with host families and wished to transfer to the sites; there were 19 such households (58 people) registered at the Alternatif site and a further 154 households (635 people) registered at the Sangaris site.
- Meanwhile, in the west of the country, the situation of Fulani herders displaced in the town of Ndim finally showed some signs of improvement with tentative return movements observed. UNHCR Field Office Paoua conducted a joint mission to the area with MINUSCA on 5 and 6 May. During this mission it was agreed that the force in Ndim will relocate to the nearest Fulani site as well as that both security and humanitarian aid will be provided to those in Mbaere, Nkolo, Mboum Mbindoye (Ndim-Ngaoundaye axis,) to Kollo, and even up to the border with Chad. This measure is intended to stop the spread of armed groups in the area.

Refugees

- The general anxiety provoked by the armed attacks against towns in the south led children and women from the local Muslim community to seek refuge in Zemio refugee camp. The reception of these IDPs has caused concerns about how best to protect the civilian character of the camp. With the Muslim community at heightened risk of being targeted, the refugee community were fearful of the IDPs' arrival bringing the conflict closer to them. Preventive measures and an increase in MINUSCA's visible presence have helped to maintain calm.
- A total of 15 travel authorisation documents were issued to refugees in Obo during the month of May 2017 to enable them to visit Bambouti. Despite this, one refugee was physically attacked at a roadblock by Central African forces (FACA) after he failed to respond to instructions given in Sango. The National Refugee Commission (CNR) has filed an official complaint against the perpetrators. Pre-registration was conducted for 11 new refugee arrivals during the reporting period.
- A large protection sensitisation meeting was held at the refugee site in Obo on 22 May 2017. This took place immediately after the departure ceremony for the Ugandan (UPDF) and American (USF) troops who had been stationed in the town.

- At the end of May, UNHCR received information about a purported 4,000 new Chadian refugee arrivals in Ndele, Bamingui-Bangoran prefecture. An assessment mission is being planned to determine the needs of the population, their reasons for flight, and the likely duration of their stay in CAR.

Refugee Outflows

- In addition to the large-scale internal displacement driven by the spike in insecurity in the south and east of the country, there was also significant cross-border movement. People from across the affected area (Alindao, Bangassou, Mobaye, Rafai, and Zangba) fled across the river into the Democratic Republic of Congo. An estimated 21,500 people made the journey from various crossing points, many doing so as a pre-emptive measure. Contact was made with UNHCR's sister operation in DRC to inform UNHCR offices in Gbadolite and Bunia of the latest movements.

Returnees

- A return survey conducted by UNHCR in Bambari during May revealed that nearly 80% of IDPs living in sites in the town do not wish to return home in the current circumstances. Most respondents indicated that they would be ready to return once certain key conditions have been met. These include the reconstruction of the shelters, the improvement of security in return zones and some degree of accompaniment in the return process. The 20% who are ready to return mainly come from areas that have remained calm for a prolonged period of time.
- Western zones of the country saw an increase in return movements during the month with the arrival of 178 households repatriating to Markounda. In nearby Kouï, NGOs reported 500 new refugee returns: a figure yet to be confirmed by UNHCR's monitoring partners. There were also an estimated 1,600 returns from Bocaranga.

Durable Solutions and Reintegration

- Discussions were held with UNDP to revive local Durable Solutions and Reintegration working groups across the west of the country. Project Partnership Agreements with three local NGOs – Association Grenier Afrique (AGA), Caritas Centrafrique, and NOURRIR – were under preparation in May. The agreements will pursue the reconstruction of 600 houses and the revitalisation of essential services in the 5th and 8th arrondissements of Bangui. Post-return monitoring of IDP returnees in these same areas continued during the month.

**SHELTER AND NFIS****Shelter/NFI/CCCM Cluster**

- Under the leadership of UNHCR, the Shelter/NFI/CCCM Cluster collaborated with the Projet d'Appui au Retour et à la Réintégration en République Centrafricaine (PARET) project of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Reintegration to facilitate the return of 594 IDPs (218 households) from sites in Bangui, including Koudoukou, Ecole Maternelle, and Notre Dame de Chartes. These IDPs were joined by 28 households from the Benz-VI site who opted to return to Kaga-Bandoro and Mala in the provinces. All were provided with cash assistance.
- The return process for the Mosque Central – now the last remaining site in Bangui – was interrupted by incidents in the provinces provoking fear amongst IDPs that retaliatory attacks may be carried out in their neighbourhoods of origin. Some 753 IDPs are still being hosted on this site. The Cluster is maintaining dialogue with IDPs and the PARET team to resume the process in the month of June 2017.
- A mission was undertaken in Bangassou to assess the shelter/NFI and CCCM needs and provide support to cluster partners in response to the crisis that broke out in May. Site planning and CCCM training activities were conducted. Some 15 community mobilisers from CARITAS were trained to implement camp management and coordination activities. Following the registration of IDPs, camp committees were set up.
- The cluster provided technical support to national NGO Yamacuir in the rehabilitation of 30 shelters for 129 beneficiaries in Yaloke. Funded by UNHCR within its reintegration programme, the rehabilitation work will soon be completed.
- Technical assistance was provided and guidance given to CARITAS for the construction of emergency community shelters in Bangassou as well as in the distribution of NFI kits to 2,000 IDPs.

Working in partnership

- 4 Ministries: (i) Interior, Public Security, Territorial Administration, line Ministry (ii) Social Affairs and National Reconciliation, (iii) Minister of Economy, Plan and Cooperation (iv) Urban development and Housing
- 2 governmental partners: the National Refugee Commission (CNR) and Projet d'Appui au Retour et à la Réintégration en République Centrafricaine (PARET), as well as 8 partners selected in 2017 to implement UNHCR activities in CAR: Afrique, Secours et Assistance; AIRD; Norwegian Refugee Council; Danish Refugee Council; Mercy Corps; Cooperazione Internazionale; INTERSOS; Vision to Change the World
- 6 national NGOs: Bangui Sans Frontières (BSF); Idéal; Yamacuir; JUPEDEC; Arbre de vie; ATEDEC;
- Three clusters led by UNHCR in CAR: Protection, Camp Coordination Camp Management (CCCM), and Non Food Items/Shelter which have been merged with CCCM.
- Partnership with UNDP and the government in the search for durable solutions for IDPs and returnees in CAR with the involvement of humanitarian partners and early recovery/development actors as well as MINUSCA.

External / Donors Relations

Special thanks to the major donors of unrestricted and regional funds in 20XX

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