Central African Republic: Projected Acute Food Insecurity situation | May to August 2020

Overview

Between May and August 2020, corresponding to the lean season, it is estimated that despite planned food assistance, 29 sub-prefectures or 0.75 million people, representing 16% of the population, are in Emergency (IPC Phase 4), while 35 sub-prefectures or 1.6 million people, representing 39% of the population, are in Crisis (IPC Phase 3). A total of 2.36 million people (representing 51% of the population analysed, 4.59 million) are in a situation of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3+). In addition, 1.61 million people, representing 35% of the population analysed, are in Stress (IPC Phase 2) with some of them at risk of being in a more severe situation of food insecurity, should the current situation persist.

Compared with the previous analysis, there has been a significant deterioration in the situation in Bangui, with the population in need of assistance increasing by 25% to 50%, in Sibut (Kemo) and Abba (Nana-Mamberé) by 15%, and in general by 5% in most sub-prefectures, with the exception of areas where planned food assistance was not taken into account in the previous analysis. In these particular areas, planned food assistance may play a role in mitigating the severity of food insecurity.

Renewed conflict between armed groups and the resurgence of inter-community conflicts in some sub-prefectures, and the disruption of populations that this generates, the disruptions of markets in terms of food prices, difficulties in supplying markets caused by COVID-19 prevention measures, and a below-average agricultural season, are the main causes of the deterioration of the situation. Regarding the agricultural season, rainfall is generally average, but the vegetation index is slightly in deficit due to low rainfall recorded between January and February 2020. Also noteworthy are the seasonal attacks of pests such as armyworms and locusts, which remain inadequately treated due to the persistence of the conflict that limits access to fields and the lack of funding to mitigate damage.

Conflict and displacement

A resurgence of conflicts between armed groups and the persistence of inter-community conflicts in some sub-prefectures (Bria, Baga-Bandoro and Ndélé) has led to significant population movements since January 2020. Civilian populations are the main victims of tensions and violence in one of the most dangerous contexts in the world for humanitarian workers. Several sources including OCHA and ACTED for example, have reported several security incidents affecting mainly civilians and humanitarian actors between January and March 2020. The Commission of Movements of Populations (CMP) estimates that the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in CAR in February 2020 is 702,348 people (CMP February 2020) including 235,019 people in IDP sites and 467,329 people in host families.

Low agricultural production

The final results for the 2019-2020 agricultural season show low production for food crops, especially cassava, which suffered from phytoparasitic problems, as well as for cash crops such as groundnuts and sesame, caused by rainfall deficits that affected the entire Central African territory. This deficit was compounded by the effects of floods and other seasonal hazards, that led to a deterioration in productivity conditions in most of the Lowland areas that supply rice and other rations and destroyed crops at an advanced stage of ripening. Armed conflict also continues to force many families to abandon crops.

Market disruptions due to COVID-19

Two weeks after the partial closure of the borders of neighbouring countries, mainly those of Cameroon and DRC, prices of imported foodstuffs recorded increases ranging from 3% to 50% in Bangui, and three weeks after the border closure, the same upward trends were observed in the prices of local products, which were relatively stable in the week following the border closure. Wholesalers highlight a disruption in the supply chain of rice, flour, oil, soap and detergent in the country.

Food assistance

In localities such as Bria (Houte-Kotto), Kaga-Bandoro (Nana-Gribiz), Bambéri (Duaka), Kou (Ouham-Pendé), Zémio and Obo (Haut-Mbomou), and Ndélé (Bamingui-Bangoran), where the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) is very high, food assistance plays a major role in the survival of the population. Bria (Yakaga) has recently been added to this list. In these localities, more than 25% of households receive food assistance in the form of food or food vouchers, providing beneficiaries with at least 50% of their daily caloric requirements. Even in localities that have not been affected by the displacement of populations, the food assistance for the most vulnerable populations plays a role in mitigating food insecurity. The people targeted by this assistance are mainly IDPs on site (for all areas with a high concentration of IDPs), IDPs living with host families, host populations and returnees, particularly in the sub-prefectures of Nola, Bouar, Bria, Kaga-Bandoro and Bazoum. Despite planning for the lean season, the various security, logistical and other challenges in certain areas with a high concentration of IDPs and difficulties in financing activities constitute a real bottleneck for the delivery of food assistance. The evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures taken to limit its spread will amplify needs, particularly in urban areas such as Bangui. The food assistance planned for the analysis period does not take into account this likely increase in needs related to COVID-19.

Key drivers

- Improved food utilization and its impact on nutrition by facilitating the awareness among households in areas with difficulties in access.
- Put in place measures to prevent and combat the Covid-19 disease, which could limit productive activities and access to food, and deteriorate livelihoods, especially during the lean season in Crisis/Emergency areas.
- Improve food utilization and its impact on nutrition by facilitating the awareness among households in areas with difficulties in access.
- Put in place measures to prevent and combat the Covid-19 disease, which could limit productive activities and access to food, and deteriorate livelihoods, especially during the lean season in Crisis/Emergency areas.
- Provide immediate food/humanitarian assistance to support the most vulnerable populations plays a role in mitigating food insecurity. The people targeted by this assistance are mainly IDPs on site (for all areas with a high concentration of IDPs), IDPs living with host families, host populations and returnees, particularly in the sub-prefectures of Nola, Bouar, Bria, Kaga-Bandoro and Bazoum. Despite planning for the lean season, the various security, logistical and other challenges in certain areas with a high concentration of IDPs and difficulties in financing activities constitute a real bottleneck for the delivery of food assistance. The evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures taken to limit its spread will amplify needs, particularly in urban areas such as Bangui. The food assistance planned for the analysis period does not take into account this likely increase in needs related to COVID-19.

Recommendations for action

- Implement urgent actions targeted by region/areas to facilitate access to food and protect livelihoods;
- Provide immediate food/humanitarian assistance to support the most vulnerable sections of the population and people with specific needs (children under 5 years old, pregnant and breastfeeding women and elderly people, in areas with difficulties in accessing markets;
- Put in place measures to prevent and combat the Covid-19 disease, which could limit productive activities and access to food, and deteriorate livelihoods, especially during the lean season in Crisis/Emergency areas;
- Improve food utilization and its impact on nutrition by facilitating the awareness among households in areas with difficulties in access.