

Central African Republic regional emergency

Violence surrounding Central African Republic's presidential and parliamentary election process in December 2020 has displaced over 200,000 people, bringing the total number of uprooted Central African nationals to close to a third of the population of 4.7 million. People have fled inside the Central African Republic, as well as into exile in Cameroon, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Republic of the Congo.

To enable targeted and timely protection and assistance for people of concern and in support of the Governments and other partners, as well as in anticipation of further deterioration of the situation, UNHCR is scaling up its emergency response and calling for urgent financial support for its activities.



\$164.7M
REQUIREMENTS

111,437 NEW DISPLACED REFUGEES
CENTRAL AFRICAN REFUGEES

100,000 NEW DISPLACED
CENTRAL AFRICAN IDPs

↳ DRC: 92,053¹ | Chad: 8,437 | Cameroon: 6,616 | Congo: 4,331

Situation overview

Violence erupted in the Central African Republic between the Government and a coalition of armed groups around the 27 December 2020 election, disrupting the 2019 peace agreement and triggering a new wave of displacement. As of February 2021, more than 100,000 people are estimated to have been internally displaced within CAR², while more than 111,000 refugees from CAR have been recorded in Cameroon, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Republic of the Congo. This influx adds to the nearly 1.3 million existing Central African forcibly displaced, bringing the total to over 1.5 million – nearly a third of the country's population.

The latest crisis is exacerbating protection risks within the Central African Republic, where violence against women and girls and a significant number of unaccompanied and separated children are already major concerns. In parallel, the number of reported forced recruitments across the country have been increasing. The main roads to Cameroon have become unsafe, preventing the cross-border delivery of vital supplies and drastically increasing the price of essential goods. The already vulnerable population in the Central African Republic is now in urgent need of food, shelter and essential household items, in addition to health care supplies and water, sanitation and hygiene services required to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other diseases.

The situation is particularly challenging in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where many of the 92,000¹ newly-

arrived refugees are spread across 40 remote localities close to the border, still within possible reach of the indiscriminate violence they fled from. New arrivals now outnumber the local population, with refugees living in makeshift shelters, without access to vital services such as education or health care. More than 19,300 Central Africans fled to Chad, Cameroon, and the Republic of the Congo. In Cameroon population movements suggest that the actual figures are higher than the number who have been registered. In Chad, refugees continue to arrive (albeit in lower numbers than at the beginning of the crisis) due to the presence of armed groups in several villages in the north-west of the Central African Republic.

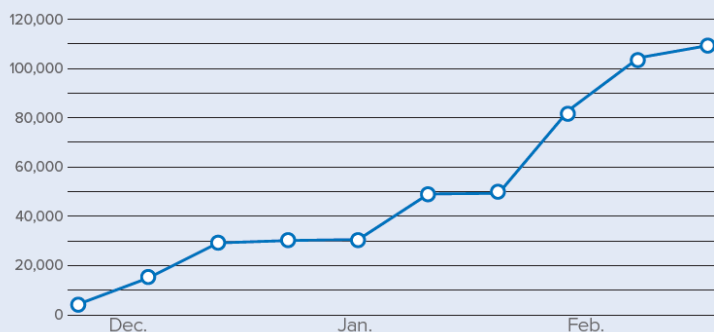
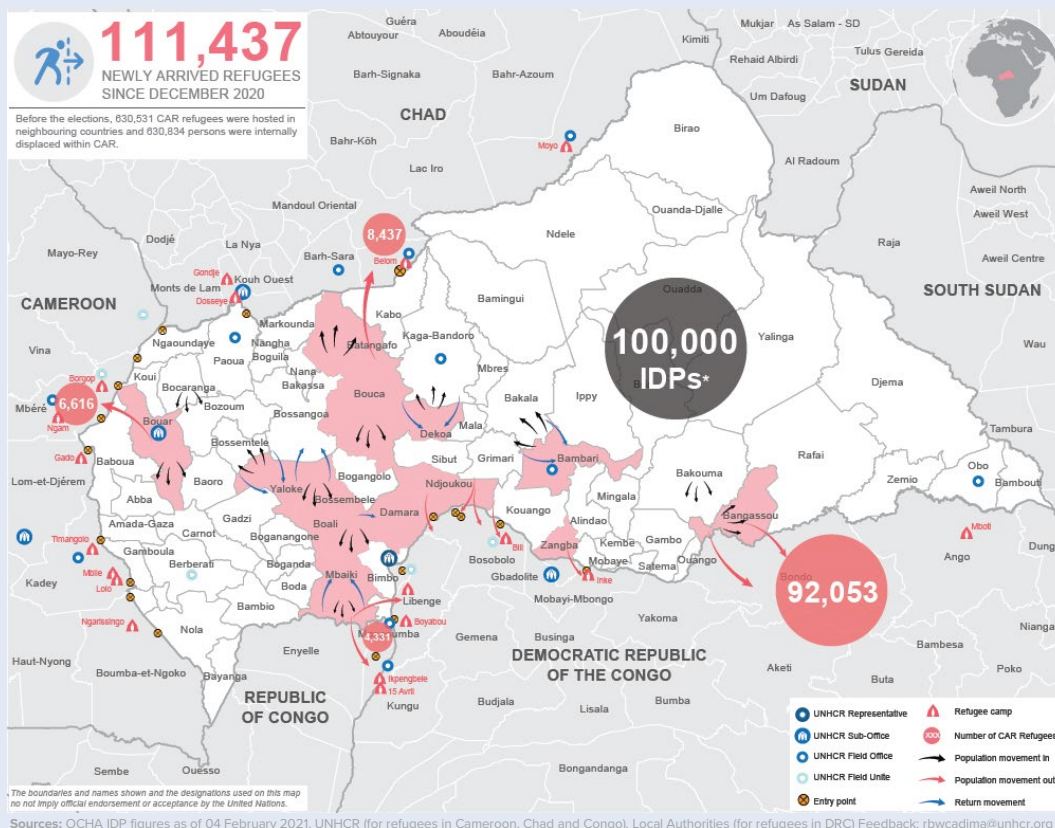
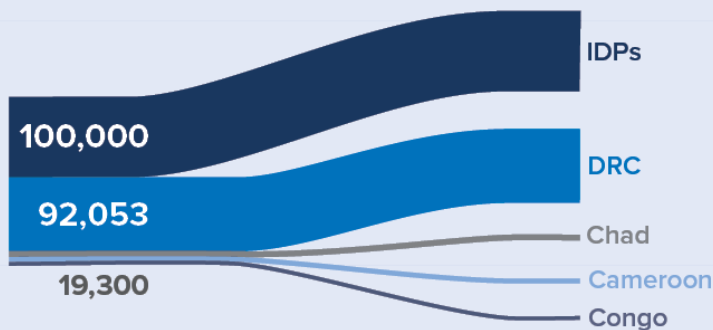
The Central African Republic has for years been one of the most consistently overlooked and underfunded emergencies in the world with persistent and, at times, record underfunding, repeatedly forcing UNHCR and its humanitarian partners to reduce critical activities. This year, and this emergency, is unfortunately no different. Erupting as it did at the beginning of the year, this new crisis has temporarily put on hold voluntary repatriation and reintegration of Central Africans and forced UNHCR to urgently reprioritize and shift some of it already limited resources towards life-saving protection and assistance.

With humanitarian and protection needs growing, UNHCR is appealing for \$164.7 million (\$13.1 million of which is additional) to deliver critical protection and assistance in the Central African Republic and neighbouring countries.

Above: Central African refugees collect non-food items at a UNHCR distribution center in Yakoma, northern DRC. © UNHCR/Hélène Caux

¹Government estimate. An updated figure will be established through biometric registration supported by UNHCR.

²OCHA Central African Republic Situation Report, 9 February 2021.

REFUGEE POPULATION GROWTH | 2020–2021

DISPLACEMENT FLOWS | 2020–2021


UNHCR’s immediate response and priorities

Despite security challenges, difficult supply lines and the ongoing global pandemic, UNHCR has scaled up its response, focusing on the urgent protection needs of the newly displaced Central African refugees. It is providing protection and life-saving assistance such as **emergency shelter, core relief items, health care, water and food**. In countries of asylum, UNHCR is conducting border and protection monitoring to proactively identify and address the most pressing needs. **Registration** of new arrivals is coupled with **protection screening**, providing support to **persons at heightened risk**, responding to and mitigating the risk of **gender-based violence**, providing **education** for school-aged children, and issuing **documentation** to new refugees. Through our interventions, UNHCR has been mindful of its **accountability to affected people**, strengthening feedback and communication mechanisms to ensure they are included and able to meaningfully participate in decisions affecting them.

COVID-19 prevention measures are also an integral part of

UNHCR’s response, both to protect the vulnerable displaced populations and to prevent the virus’ spread in countries where health care systems are already overstretched. Despite COVID-19 and the resulting closure of land borders, Governments continue to grant access to asylum.

UNHCR and partners follow a “stay and deliver” approach. UNHCR is building and equipping quarantine centres, testing, providing masks, awareness-raising on COVID-19 prevention and social distancing, improving water, sanitation and health resources, treating and isolating any positive cases. Registration and distribution centres have requirements for health screenings, masks, social distancing and hand washing, while promoting good hygiene and awareness of the disease. UNHCR is alleviating the required lockdowns by providing cash assistance and core relief items to those worst affected, and by supporting virtual and distance learning to enable children and youth to continue with their studies.

In countries of asylum, UNHCR will enhance border and protection monitoring, registration and documentation of new arrivals, and is putting in place a tailored community-based approach to address the main protection risks, including heightened risk of gender-based violence. Child protection and education will be scaled up to provide a protective environment for newly displaced children. Persons at heightened risk will receive psychosocial and material support as appropriate. Basic needs of new arrivals will be addressed through shelter and core relief items, as well as health and water, sanitation and hygiene services.

UNHCR will coordinate the response in countries of asylum through the Refugee Coordination Model and assure a strong cluster coordination for protection, shelter/core relief items and camp coordination and camp management (CCCM) in the Central African Republic.

A strong programme to promote protection from sexual exploitation and abuse will be put in place from the onset of the emergency response, to ensure that UNHCR and partners, as well as displaced communities, are informed about the Office's "zero tolerance" policy and are able to report sexual abuse and exploitation if it occurs.

Central African Republic

Insecurity and the activity of armed groups is complicating the emergency response to the 100,000 newly internally displaced. Violence has disrupted humanitarian supply lines and limited access to a population already scattered across 126 different sites and in host families throughout the country. The violence poses a protection threat with gender-based violence and forced recruitment both prevalent.

With the number of displaced continuing to increase, UNHCR is preparing a response for a potential total of 150,000 new IDPs by the middle of the year. As Protection Cluster lead and a front-line protection actor, UNHCR will focus on enhanced protection monitoring to identify and measure protection trends as a basis for an informed and cohesive response and advocacy. UNHCR will also contribute to the prevention of human rights violations through awareness-raising campaigns, and training on international protection standards for Government officials, policy makers and opinion leaders. With limited access to the affected population, UNHCR will

strengthen community-based protection, bolstering community networks.

With gender-based violence representing almost 50% of reported protection incidents in 2020, and with risks growing amid the ongoing emergency, a particular focus will be put on prevention and response, as well as child protection. UNHCR and its partners are implementing a comprehensive strategy to ensure that survivors' psychosocial, medical, legal and subsistence needs are met in a holistic manner. Existing referral services will be mapped and case management systems will be organized to connect victims to specialized assistance providers.

UNHCR will also distribute 19,000 core relief item kits for 95,000 IDPs. In line with the Humanitarian Response Plan strategy, a CCCM mobile approach will be used, whereby roving protection teams will reach out to IDPs in informal settlements and in host communities. Cash assistance will be prioritized for 2,500 IDPs at heightened risk in urban areas.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

According to the Government, more than 92,000 refugees have arrived in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the country is now hosting 85% of new Central African refugees. UNHCR is supporting the Government with biometric registration of asylum-seekers and will accelerate registration in Nord Ubangi and Sud Ubangi Provinces, with over 38,000 new asylum-seekers already biometrically registered at an average rate of 1,000 people per day.

UNHCR's approach to this emergency is primarily focused on reinforcing already-existing Government infrastructure, enhancing community-based management systems, augmenting cash assistance, and strengthening coordination with all partners.

UNHCR's emergency response prioritizes systematic identification of and targeted assistance to persons at heightened risk and protection monitoring with a specific focus on addressing violations of human rights, including gender-based violence, and strengthening child protection, with children constituting over 60% of new refugee arrivals. UNHCR will prioritize support to persons at heightened risk – including women and girls at risk as well as unaccompanied children – who will be identified in early assessments. Survivors of gender-based violence will be supported and referred to appropriate services, and

gender-based violence prevention and risk mitigation activities will be prioritized as well. Family tracing and reunification services will be conducted for unaccompanied children in collaboration with relevant actors on the ground (ICRC), and best interest determination procedures will be undertaken for those children. Actions will also be taken to address the urgent education needs of the newly-arrived children, including increasing the number of education facilities, teachers and school materials.

Currently UNHCR is assisting the most vulnerable families with relief items, such as plastic sheeting, mosquito nets, mats and jerrycans. With additional funding, UNHCR will be able to improve living conditions for new arrivals by distributing core relief items and emergency shelter for up to 55,000 refugees and is prioritizing the relocation of new arrivals to safer areas further from the border. UNHCR has identified four sites where up to 35,000 new arrivals can be relocated in the coming 12 months: 10,000 in Modale, 10,000 in Goya, 10,000 in Bossobolo and 5,000 in Zongo. In these sites, UNHCR will construct or repair infrastructure including water installations, sanitation facilities, health centres and schools, and develop income-generating activities, particularly agriculture. This will help promote self-reliance among refugees and foster peaceful coexistence with the host community.

Health supplies including medical equipment and essential life-saving medicines, as well as trained health care personnel are scarce or non-existent in many of the areas where newly-arriving refugees have settled. Primary health care access, including access to reproductive health care, remains extremely limited.

UNHCR will therefore enhance primary health care and put in place community-based identification and referral mechanisms.

Strengthening COVID-19 awareness-raising and prevention measures in sites hosting new arrivals is also urgently needed.

Chad

More than 8,400 Central African refugees have been registered by UNHCR in Chad, 63% of whom are children, and 11% are persons at heightened risk. Two quarantine centres with capacity for 800 people were set up to accommodate a 14-day quarantine to prevent the spread of COVID-19, as is required for all new arrivals.

UNHCR anticipates the arrival of 20,000 refugees in the first six months of the emergency. In addition to continuous border and protection monitoring to ensure access to territory and asylum, UNHCR continues to provide registration and documentation to new arrivals. UNHCR's immediate response to the ongoing crisis will focus on providing protection and access to basic services including emergency shelter for up to 4,000 households, distribution of basic domestic items, and health care, COVID-19 preventive and mitigation measures, WASH, as well as hot meals and nutrition support to up to 2,100 malnourished children.

Child protection will be a core component of the response, and the identification of separated and unaccompanied children and family tracing for reunification purposes will be prioritized. Increasing capacity to provide education for children both in camps and villages early in the response will also be a priority, with initial assessments indicating that only 50% of the children were in school in CAR.

In villages in border areas, UNHCR will provide emergency assistance to refugees and local communities, and provide food assistance for 20,000 people with WFP, as well as 4,000 core relief item kits to 20,000 individuals. UNHCR plans to relocate up to 8,000 refugees from the border to the site in Doholo, which will require 1,600 emergency shelters. The transfer to Doholo will continue as capacity allows, as well as to other sites along the border. Alternatives to camps are also being promoted by offering transfer to identified villages where the displaced will live with host communities. An additional 2,400 emergency shelters will be needed for 12,000 refugees in these villages, where people will be provided with core relief items and WFP supplied-food rations.

Through a community-based protection response, UNHCR will strengthen community networks to improve the inclusion, participation and social cohesion of refugees. UNHCR will also prioritize support to persons at heightened risk, including women and girls at risk, whom it will seek to identify through protection monitoring. Through a holistic and survivor-centred response to gender-based violence, UNHCR will provide medical, psychosocial and material support as needed, and prevention efforts and sensitization activities will be conducted at the community level.

Cameroon

More than 6,600 new Central African refugees have crossed into Cameroon, 15% of whom have specific needs, such as persons with physical disabilities and woman-headed households, according to the latest protection screenings. UNHCR has prioritized border monitoring to ensure access to territory, asylum and assistance to persons with specific needs. UNHCR also plans to build capacity for the registration and documentation for up to 30,000 potential new arrivals in first six months of the crisis.

Health screenings and quarantine measures will also be vital to preventing the spread of COVID-19, with 48 positive cases among Central African refugees, including 10 new arrivals already recorded as of 16 February. Positive cases are isolated and treated in local hospitals.

Cameroon is already the largest host of refugees from the Central African Republic, with more than 316,000 before the latest influx. New arrivals have strained resources that



Across the border, but still in the crossfire

Nine-year-old Jeremy and his family fled escalating violence in the Central African Republic at the start of the new year, escaping across the border into neighbouring DRC with only the clothes on their backs. They found shelter in Ndu, just a few short kilometres from the border.

They thought they had found a safe place to wait for the violence to end – somewhere childhoods could resume without fear – but just a few weeks later, Jeremy was playing near his tent with new friends when he was suddenly struck in the leg by a stray bullet.

He had to travel a painful 75km on bumpy roads to get the medical care he needed. Jeremy has recovered, but his family still questions their safety and their future.

“We came with no belongings. We are hosted by a Congolese family here but it’s hard to put food on the table,” his mother Christine says.

were already thin before the crisis with the camp at Gado nearing full capacity.

UNHCR's emergency response will provide shelter and core relief items for 5,000 new arrivals who can be accommodated in Gado whilst working to find alternative land for the remaining new arrivals. Eight villages have been identified which could host up to 25,000 refugees, but additional interventions will be necessary to improve infrastructure and social services.

Republic of the Congo

More than 4,300 Central Africans have fled to the Republic of the Congo, and UNHCR anticipates that figure could reach 12,000 arrivals in the first six months of the crisis.

UNHCR's emergency response has focused on immediate protection and life-saving activities, while prioritizing persons at heightened risk, specifically survivors of gender-based violence and unaccompanied children. Up to 1,000 new arrivals with specific needs, including persons with disabilities or chronic illness, will be transferred to the refugee settlement in Bétou and will be provided with shelter and core relief items. Shelter support will also be provided for refugees living in local communities, and cash assistance will be prioritized to deliver food assistance for new arrivals.

In addition to providing vital shelter and WASH infrastructure support for refugees and their hosts, UNHCR will distribute food assistance to 30,000 individuals, and provide 6,000 shelter kits and 6,000 core relief item kits. Education for children will also be prioritized in all locations, and additional classroom and WASH capacity will be required for the new population as local schools are already overstretched. To promote self-sufficiency, access to agriculture and livestock opportunities will be prioritized early in the response, as well as the provision of government-issued biometric identity cards, which will allow freedom of movement and better access to services and livelihoods opportunities.

Medical screenings for new arrivals will continue to help detect and prevent the spread of COVID-19, and UNHCR will support local health centres with medicines, supplies, equipment and staff to bolster access to basic health care services, which currently remain minimal. WASH services are also essential, and UNHCR will prioritize the rehabilitation of existing water and sanitation infrastructure and the distribution of water treatment supplies, while working to construct new boreholes, hand washing stations, communal latrines and showers.

UNHCR will also support local schools to include refugee children, work to improve the capacity of local authorities on protection and refugee issues and engage with local communities to strengthen local integration outcomes for new arrivals living outside the settlements.

Coordination and working in partnership

In the **Central African Republic**, UNHCR leads the protection cluster and co-leads the merged CCCM and shelter cluster (co-chaired with IOM). UNHCR also works closely with the MINUSCA peacekeeping mission to address security and operational challenges.

Outside of the **Central African Republic**, in line with the Refugee Coordination Model (RCM), UNHCR leads and coordinates the refugee response in collaboration with host governments. The refugee response is also coordinated with other UN agencies and partners, such as WFP, UNFPA and UNICEF. UNHCR also works with a number of national and international NGOs who implement

In **Chad**, refugee coordination structures are in place with a working group covering the areas receiving newly arrived Central African refugees. UNHCR works with local authorities and the National Commission for the Reception and Reintegration of Refugees.

In **Cameroon**, together with Government counterparts, UNHCR has established and leads refugee coordination structures that include working groups on child protection, gender-based violence, WASH, health, food security and livelihoods. Cameroon is also part of the UNHCR and UNICEF two-year Blueprint for Joint Action, promoting the inclusion of refugee children and support for their host

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