



Central African Republic Crisis

ECHO CRISIS REPORT N°22

Period covered
1/03/2015 to 15/05/2015

Time of validity
20:00 (UTC)

ECHO Field Office
Bangui

IDPs in CAR:
436 119 estimated IDPs
of which 43 592 in
Bangui (source UNCHR)

**Total CAR refugees in
neighbouring countries**
462 015, of which
220 333 since December
2013 (source UNHCR)

**Number of CAR
refugees in Chad since
December 2013:** 17 078
(source UNHCR)

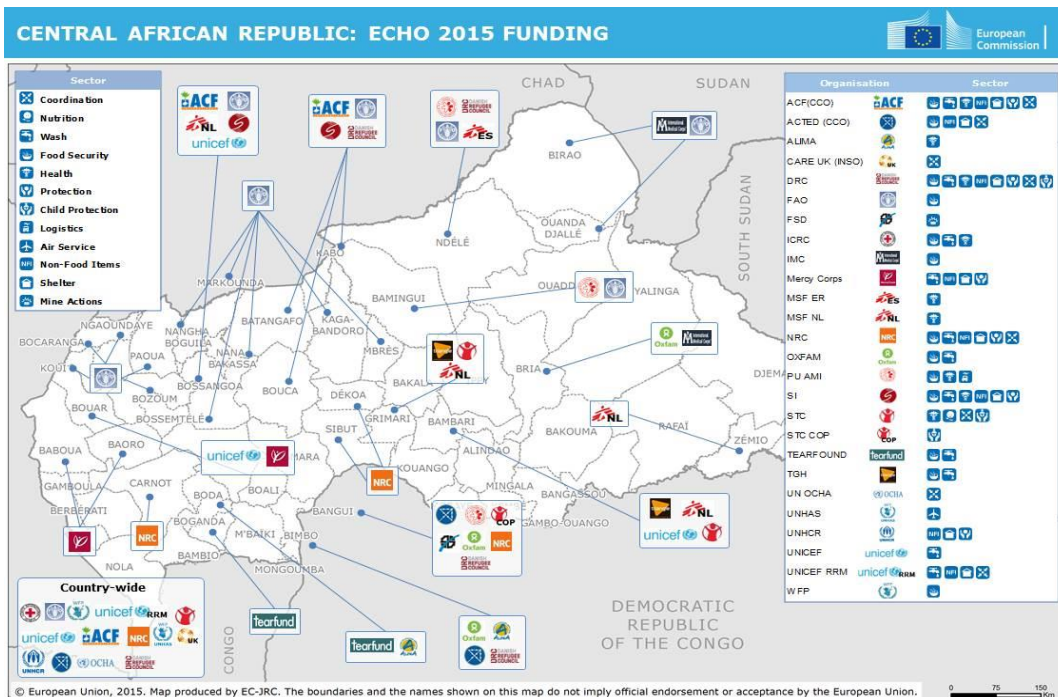
**CAR refugees in
Cameroon since
December 2013:**
140 820 (source UNHCR)

**CAR refugees in the
Democratic Republic of
Congo since December
2013:**
Over 45 000(source
UNHCR)

**CAR refugees in the
Republic of Congo
since December 2013:**
15 683 (source UNHCR)

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1. Map



2. ECHO Recommendation / action

ECHO reiterates its call to the international community to maintain a special attention to the situation in CAR and its impact in the already fragile neighboring region.

In this regard and following recent UN IASC decision to deactivate the L3 category for CAR, ECHO calls upon all humanitarian organisations and UN agencies to maintain field presence and operational response at an adequate level. In this critical moment it is essential to avoid any gap in terms of response capacity, which could damage the stabilization efforts already undertaken.

Despite some positive recent trends, needs remain huge and the capacity of actors in the field remains limited by restricted humanitarian access, acute insecurity and stretched resources. While acknowledging the improvement of security in the main cities, ECHO remains concerned by increased incidents on the axes. In this regard, the impact of transhumance movements needs to be properly taken into account and security measures need to be reinforced in order to avoid further clashes and population movements.

ECHO reiterates its call on the humanitarian community to reinforce its support to IDPs in CAR, particularly in terms of food security, health and protection-related needs.

ECHO remains committed to the implementation of an adapted and global return strategy for the displaced populations. Freedom of choice and movements for all CAR citizens, including people living in enclaves, should be observed by all parties. Decent alternatives that could be accepted on a voluntary basis should be offered to those populations.

ECHO stresses again the need for all state and non-state actors in CAR to consider access to populations in need of life-saving assistance as a priority and to do their utmost to secure access in full respect of the humanitarian principles, human rights and international humanitarian law.

In the current situation in CAR, where emergency actions are implemented in parallel with longer-term interventions, such as those funded by the EU Bekou Trust Fund, ECHO emphasises the need for actors active in the field to adapt their capacities and profile to the operational requirements of a transition phase.

3. Situation

General

Following a first phase of popular consultations across the country, the political agenda in CAR has been defined during the past weeks by the **Bangui National Forum**, which took place from 4 to 11 May. The political discussions held in this forum have resulted, inter alia, in the signature of the *Republican Pact for Peace, National Reconciliation and Reconstruction*, in a request to postpone the deadline for the general elections until end 2015, as well as in the signature of an agreement on disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation (DDRR). Based on these elements, the political transition process in the country might enter a new and more promising phase.

In the provinces, the risk of further deterioration of the situation lays heavily on **transhumance** movements during which the cattle will go back north again. The areas concerned are mainly the Northwestern corridor, along the border with Cameroon, and the central corridor. These zones remain especially problematic since most of the clashes as well as most of the incidents involving civilians/humanitarians are concentrated there, pushing hundreds of people to flee and seek refuge in packed IDP sites (incidents have been recently reported in areas around Batangafo and Bouca).

Security:

Following the latest available data, INSO reports 263 incidents in April 2015, 23 involving NGOs. During the first week of May, 56 incidents have been reported which represents a 21.7% increase compared to the last week of April; 10.7% of them involve humanitarian actors. During the first two weeks of May, 110 incidents have been reported, with a visible trend downwards in Bangui due to reinforced presence of internal security forces and patrols. However more incidents are reported on the axes, mainly on the central one. As far as humanitarian workers are concerned, carjacking remains the most common type of incident; passengers are robbed and systematically threatened.

This trend is likely to be on the rise, even on the Western axis (towards Cameroon) and the central corridor, once the safest in the country. Despite the recent UNSC resolution approving the reinforcement of MINUSCA resources, the UN forces still strive to fully secure the axes and some specific and highly sensitive spots known to be at risk for both civilians and humanitarians (such as Kouango, Markounda or Mbres).

In Bangui, incidents are mainly linked to criminality, while in the provinces attacks on civilians, abuses and violent robberies/carjacking on humanitarian workers prevail.

Humanitarian issues:

The return of displaced populations to their place of origin has remained high on the agenda over the last weeks. Unfortunately very limited improvements have been reported in key areas such as in the enclaves: as an example only a dozen family reunifications could be made in **Yaloke** and another dozen of people could be relocated to Cameroon with the assistance of MINUSCA.

National authorities remain determined to empty **Mpoko** site. In this particular case a new deadline had been set at 31 May. Together with the authorities, the UN agencies have finalised a return strategy for the IDPs defining a package for return. While INGOs have chosen not to be actively involved in the transfers from the camp, they are rather prepositioning themselves in the locations of arrival. At the beginning of May, some 700 families (representing around 3500 individuals) had already “de-registered” from Mpoko to receive the return package and move back to the quarters.

The issue of the enclaves seems to be stagnating; the Protection Cluster (UNHCR) counts at least 7 enclaves throughout the country where free movements of the people are denied. Despite a slight improvement in the living conditions of secluded populations, it remains difficult for them to move to places where they feel safe together with their cattle.

The humanitarian community remains engaged in favour of safer access to sensitive locations or “grey areas”, as access to Kouango, Kouki or Mbres remain difficult to for security reasons. People fleeing attacks either hide in the bush or seek refuge in the closest IDP camps. In this context, providing aid for the most vulnerable remains a challenge as long as the axes are not fully secured.

With almost 50 000 people, **Batangafo**, the biggest IDP camp of the country, illustrates in a clear manner several facets of the conflict: city at the crossing points of transhumance routes; presence of heavily armed elements on the axis and circling the town since the conflict erupted; infiltration of armed elements in the camp; people from the villages and from the quarters seeking refuge in the camp; ongoing MINUSCA intervention to disarm the armed groups and restore State symbols.

In the triangle Mbres-Kaga Bandoro-Sido, and in Bambari region, population displacements are still noticed. Thousands of people fled their villages to arrive in Bambari and Grimari camps, to hide in the bush, or even, to cross the border towards the Democratic Republic of Congo (more than 45 000 according to latest figures).

The UNICEF-led RRM (Rapid Response Mechanism) partners are among the few teams able to deploy and respond to such emergencies.

The broad issue of **transhumance** is likely to produce further adverse effects. For months, cattle were stuck and stopped from descending southwards, eroding grazing areas. With the end of the first phase of the transhumance, cattle herders will soon move north and westwards again, and will try to cross back into Chad and Cameroon, which is likely to be the source of new instability in the affected area.

4. Aid and assistance required / needs assessment

Food Security:

The crisis continues to have a toll on food security, due to a rarefaction of basic food products on the market as well as a reduction of food reserves (estimated at 40-50% of their usual level). The latest IPC indicates that 1.5 million people are in need of food assistance: 19% of rural populations are in phase 3 (crisis), and an additional 12% in phase 4 (emergency). In Bangui only, 209 978 people are in need of food assistance. A workshop to review the food insecurity classification in CAR (i.e. 10th session of the IPC) was held in April and its findings are expected to be published by the end of May.

The climate of violence and insecurity which characterised 2014 had a negative impact on the agricultural production, which is estimated as 58% lower than the average pre-crisis level. According

to the latest projections made by the FAO and its partners, the current seeds assistance capacity is expected to cover 86 400 vulnerable households, 42.4% short of the target of 150 000 households. In most affected areas, WFP will complement the seeds assistance by improving access to food during the sowing and weeding season (through food assistance ratio). If not supported during the launching of the agricultural production, rural households' food security levels will deteriorate further.

The persisting level of insecurity generated by the crisis has impacted transhumance movements/dynamics and traditional pastoral corridors, which is increasingly resulting in tensions between farmers and nomadic breeders. A multi-agency study has recently been finalised (FAO, ANDE, CRS and DRC) in areas with a strong concentration of nomadic breeders (notably the prefectures of Ouham Pendé, Nana Mambéré, Mambéré Kadéï, Lobaye, Ouaka, Haute kotto, Basse Kotto, Mbomou, Kémo, Ouham, Nana Gribizi and Bamingui Bangoran) to investigate transhumance dynamics over 2014 and their impact on livelihoods of both farmers and breeders, as well as on protection issues. Based on its findings, the study put forward recommendations for priority actions which include, among others: increasing security over large pastoral corridors and areas at high concentration of cattle; providing livestock emergency assistance, including both veterinary services and water points along pastoral corridors; supporting the re-establishment of government-led veterinary assistance; and reinforcing the platform/dialogue over transhumance at national and regional level.

Nutrition:

According to the latest UNICEF projections from the SMART 2014, 22 700 children are expected to suffer from Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) and 47 000 from Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM) in 2015. The main causes of malnutrition are due to lack of access to health services as well as to proper water and sanitation.

While the nutrition cluster continues to call for increased support for the integration of acute malnutrition management into the national health system, the community-based management of acute malnutrition outside of Bangui is hindered by insecurity and by dilapidated or destroyed health facilities.

With its partners, WFP aims at supporting 69 700 children through its nutrition programme over 2015.

Health:

With 106 samples tested positive for Rubella out of 160 in 9 different districts including Bangui, WHO in the last week has chosen to draw attention to the rubella epidemics, and, together with the Minister of Health, is defining a strategy of mass vaccination campaign.

While measles outbreaks are also confirmed in Moyenne-Sido, Kaga Bandoro and in the South-East of the country, it is obvious that both indications refer to a very low EPI coverage by a national health system that was already very fragile before the conflict; recurrent people's movement and inaccessible displaced people's sites due to insecurity constrain medical organisations' attempts to increase coverage.

Finally, the beginning of the rainy season underlines the need to closely monitor the impact of the malaria peaks in the months to come. A nearly 2-year conflict and massive displacements of people made access to treatment difficult. Only in Paoua and Markounda around 150 000 people are estimated in need of treatment, while Mentor Initiative, one of the very few actors present, is currently reducing malaria control activities due to lack of funding.

Protection:

Protection violations are still a great concern in CAR. The Protection cluster pursues its advocacy efforts for improved safety of civilians and better access for humanitarian actors, particularly in "hotspot" areas (notably the northern part of Ouham Prefecture, Bambari, Kuango and Bangui).

Following their recent joint mission to CAR, a high level UN-EU delegation including the Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, Kyung-wha Kang, the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons, Chaloka Beyani and ECHO Director of Operations, Jean-Louis de Brouwer called for greater access and protection of IDPs and vulnerable communities in the country, for the restoration of social cohesion against sectarian and ethnic divides, and for the safeguard of humanitarian space to ensure access to most vulnerable populations.

In a similar tone, during the 28th session of the Human Right Council, the UN Independent Expert on the situation of Human Rights in CAR, Marie-Thérèse Keita Bocoum, presented findings of her visit to CAR in February 2015. Welcoming positive recent developments, she stressed the ongoing severity and prevalence of human rights abuses perpetrated against civilians in a context of total impunity, and expressed continued concern regarding the rights of minorities. She called for investments in humanitarian protection programs, for greater access to justice and psychosocial assistance for victims of sexual violence, as well as for the urgent development of a strategy of demobilisation and rehabilitation of the 8 000-10 000 children associated with armed groups (of which the UN Human Rights Council estimates that only approximately 400 have been released).

Assistance is urgently needed for children affected by the crisis, particularly family tracing and reunification activities for unaccompanied and separated minors following new waves of violence and displacement.

Shelter/NFI/CCCM:

Notwithstanding some return trends, the number of IDPs in CAR is still estimated at more than 436 119 people (UNHCR/Commission des Mouvements de Population - CMP), while the presence of armed groups, economic interests over natural resources and transhumance are at the origin of new population movements. In the last months, Ouaka and Nana Grebizi prefectures witnessed forced displacements of population towards Bambari and Kaga Bandoro, respectively. New arrivals also continue to be registered in and around Batangafo. Indeed, according to the latest figures from the CMP, Ouham is the prefecture with the highest concentration of IDPs with 78 665 (18%, 70% of which are in IDP sites), while over 40 000 IDPs are still residing in 34 sites in Bangui and Bimbo.

Humanitarian actors remain engaged supporting the voluntary return of IDPs to their areas of origin through owner-driven housing-reconstruction programmes, both in Bangui (notably the 3rd, 5th and 8th arrondissement), and the provinces (such as Lobaye).

WASH:

As previously mentioned, WASH assistance is a concern in IDP sites, particularly those hosting IDPs since a long time (i.e. protracted displacement), with regards to access to potable water and the maintenance of WASH infrastructure in IDP sites in Bangui and Bimbo. The lack of drilling machines in CAR (only five available in the country) is severely hampering efforts to make available reliable water points capable to replace water trucking in Bangui, Bambari and Batangafo.

Improvement in access to potable water is an important aspect in strategies supporting the return of IDPs to their areas of origin. Humanitarian actors are thus identifying needs for rehabilitation of water infrastructure in key areas of return (including Bangui, Bimbo as well as return areas in the provinces, notably the North-west and South-West areas bordering with Cameroon).

5. Local response

N/A

6. International response

Shelter/NFI/CCCM:

Between January and April 2015, the UNICEF-led Rapid Response Mechanism conducted 24 multi-sectoral needs assessment and 14 emergency interventions, mainly responding to the urgent needs of newly displaced populations (51 508 people received NFI kits and 13 513 people urgent WASH assistance). If new IDPs are generally assisted through multi-agency rapid response mechanisms (the RRM but also other UN and NGO interventions under the coordination of the cluster system), the provision of basic services for longer-term IDPs (i.e. prolonged displacement) is hampered by a limited number of actors active in IDP sites, particularly in Bangui where the rehabilitation of community shelters and drainage work is urgently needed before the rainy season.

Following the International Contact Group on the Central African Republic's directive to accelerate assistance programs to support the return of the 18 695 IDPs still residing in Mpoko, aiming at a prompt closure of this site, an intention survey conducted in March by DRC confirmed the wish for the majority of this population (55%) to return to their area of origin rather than relocating to the AVICOM alternative site identified for this purpose (only 2% or 70 families expressed in favour of this alternative). Based on these findings, the Government, with the technical support of UN agencies and clusters, has established a "closure plan" spanning from mid-April to the end of May, with an assistance strategy focusing on the improvement of access to basic services and livelihood opportunities in the neighborhoods/areas of return, but also including a "return package" composed of 90 000 FCFA, one tarpaulin, three mosquito nets and a two to four-month food ratio.

LRRD

The implementation of the first wave of actions financed by the EU Trust Fund for CAR (also known as "Bekou",) is now entering a new phase with the first concrete results visible in the field.

Security

International forces have been focusing their intervention in securing cities, in the light of their stretched deployment capacities. MINUSCA has chosen to secure strategic and sensitive locations (such as cities where cattle movements are expected, hence high concentration of armed groups).

EUFOR handed over its tasks to MINUSCA-Police with regards to the security of 3rd and 5th districts in Bangui. The Police Station of the 3rd district, very symbolic as it lies in the heart of the former "Muslim quarter", has been opened and patrols are planned to maintain security in and around PK5.

The EU Military Advisory Mission led by General Laugel started in March, supporting the FACA reform.

The French force Sangaris has planned to downsize from June 2015.

UN response capacity

On 13 May, the IASC principals under the leadership of Valerie Amos decided the de-activation of the L3 emergency level in CAR. The D-SRSG becomes triple-hatted, and a deputy Humanitarian Coordinator will be appointed soon.

7. On-site coordination mechanism

Government - Donors

The Government has created and consolidated several platforms of coordination aiming at ensuring a reinforced national presence in the discussions linked to some sensitive issues such as the IDP return in Bangui. In this framework a "Comité National Stratégique" (CNS) has been created with the

objective of defining the next steps for reconstruction, governance and donor coordination in the country. Within this coordination structure, based on four thematic groups, the EU has been nominated as co-lead of the sub-group "Aid and Humanitarian Assistance" (the other three groups within the CNS deal with governance, SSR, Economic recovery).

Donors

In early April, donors funding humanitarian assistance met for the second time under OCHA's leadership. The basics of coordination were set up upon agreement over data and information sharing.

In early May, all donors present in country, including humanitarian and development agencies, met to discuss how to increase coordination in view of supporting the voluntary return of IDPs in Bangui area.

8. Other information

Within an extremely challenging humanitarian context, marked by the proliferation of highly visible man-made conflicts as well as the impact of natural disasters, the CAR crisis remains present in the international agenda. The meeting held in the margins of the World Bank Spring meetings and the High level conference in CAR scheduled in Brussels on the 26 of May can be presented as efforts to maintain CAR on the radar screen of the international community and to avoid CAR becoming again a forgotten crisis.

Donor list (EDRIS) (as of 20/05/2015)

Year – 2015	
Donor	Amount
ECHO	14 000 000 €
Belgium	4 000 000 €
Czech Republic	72 687,62 €
Denmark	2 414 832,28 €
Finland	3 100 000 €
Germany	5 500 000 €
Ireland	3 000 000 €
Luxembourg	100 000 €
Netherlands	4 000 000 €
Sweden	8 877 332,43 €
United Kingdom	13 926 712,79 €
Sum:	58 991 565,12€