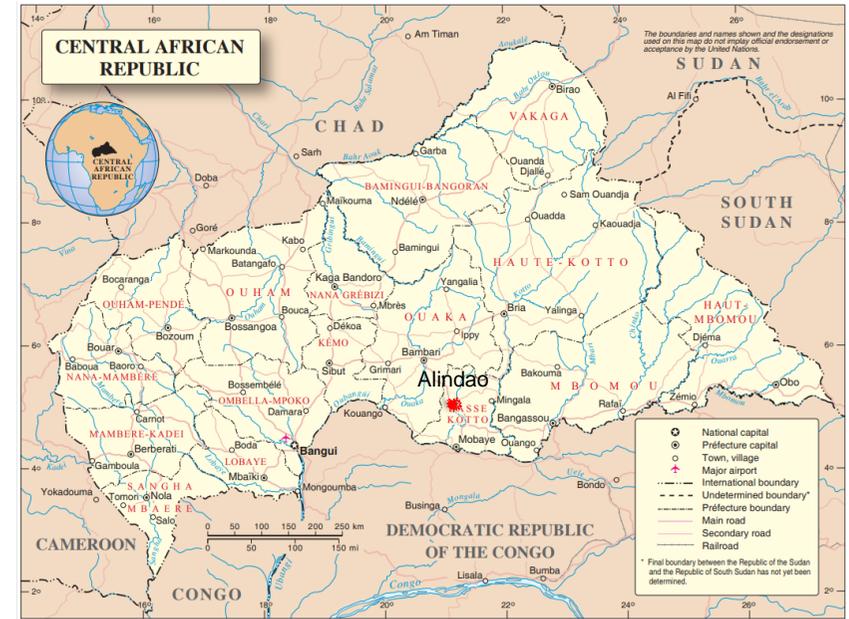


An IDP settlement in Alindao town was attacked on 15 November after tensions rose between Union for Peace in Central African Republic (UPC) fighters and anti-Balaka militias in the area. At least 60 people were killed and more than 18,000 people fled the city to find safety in other parts of town or in the bush. The IDP camp burned down, leaving the camp population in urgent need of shelter and NFI support.

NEED FOR INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE



IMPACT



Anticipated scope and scale

Protection risks remain in Alindao. Despite the increased presence of MINUSCA soldiers in the area, another attack is possible.

Armed groups are often perceived to be motivated by ethnic or religious identity. This leads to the **isolation of communities** and potential attacks and retaliation against civilians.

Tensions between IDPs and host communities have been reported in the past and could increase if new displacements put pressure on limited resources.

Key priorities



18,000+
people displaced



Important damage
to shelter and NFIs



54,000+
food insecure people in Alindao

Humanitarian constraints



Security incidents against humanitarian actors are frequently reported, and lead to the regular suspension of activities. Roads are often blocked, insecure or in poor condition.

Limitations

It is unclear how many other IDPs are already displaced in the area, and what their humanitarian needs are.

Crisis impact

An IDP settlement run by the Catholic Mission in Alindao town was attacked and set on fire on 15 November, following increased tensions between Union for Peace in Central African Republic (UPC) fighters and anti-Balaka militias in the area. At least 60 people were killed and more than 18,000 people fled to the MINUSCA camp, other IDP camps around the city and the nearby bush lands. (Nutrition Cluster 15/11/2018, Jeune Afrique 17/11/2018, RFI 16/11/2018)

Protection: Civilians are often direct targets of armed groups. Between January and September, more than 9,000 protection incidents were reported in the country. (OCHA 21/11/2018) Populations that fled the IDP camp, especially those in the bush, are exposed to protection risks and could fall victim to further attacks or sexual violence.

Food: Some 54,000 people were already food insecure in Alindao district. (IPC 29/10/2018) The new wave of displacement resulting from the attack on the IDP camp will make it necessary to reorganise food distribution in the area to reach the populations in need in the new sites of displacement. IDPs sheltering in bush lands will be harder to reach.

Health: A health centre and a hospital are the only two health facilities in the town of Alindao. The urban health centre remains closed as most personnel fled after the attack. (Nutrition Cluster 15/11/2018) The mobile clinics organised by MSF are not running anymore as activities were suspended in February 2018 due to increased violence and access constraints. (Caritas 05/06/2018) The affected communities will also require psychosocial support as people are likely to experience post-traumatic stress disorder and similar syndromes. (IOM 29/06/2018, IOM 2009)

Shelter and NFIs: 20,000 people were living in the Catholic Mission's IDP camp. The extent of the damage caused by the fire in the camp has not been accurately reported. Some local sources indicated it was almost completely burned down. (CNC 15/11/2018) An evaluation before the attack showed that the population living in the five IDP camps of Alindao, including those living in the Catholic Mission camp, were already in need of shelter and NFI assistance. Almost all IDP households questioned were living in sub-standards shelters and needed support to access basic NFI such as buckets, pots, linens or mosquito nets. (UNICEF/ACTED 22/08/2018) The affected residents of the Catholic Mission IDP camp probably have few resources after the attack and require urgent shelter and NFI support.

WASH: Prior to the attack, the WASH situation in the IDP camps of Alindao was also precarious and new latrines were urgently needed. Access to protected sources of water is limited, increasing the risks of transmission of waterborne diseases and the emergence of competition for water resources. (OCHA/COOPI 28/04/2017)

Education: Violence in Alindao has disrupted access to education for children, not only in the IDP camps but also among the host communities. Only 5,800 children have access to primary education, compared with 35,000 in 2016. (VOA 03/09/2018)

Vulnerable groups affected

Prior to the attack, 35,000 people displaced by violence were living with host families and in five IDP camps: ELIM, AFAPS, PK3, the Catholic Mission and an unnamed fifth site. The site around the Catholic Mission was the main IDP camp in Alindao, sheltering around 20,000 people, including more than 7,000 women and 6,000 children under five years old. (UNICEF/ACTED 22/08/2018)

The people affected by the attack are especially vulnerable, as most had already been displaced by violence that affected surrounding villages in 2016 and 2017, especially in the areas between Alindao and Pavica. Field visits found most of the villages along this axis are empty and that most of the displaced inhabitants were sheltered in the IDP camp of the Catholic Mission. (Caritas 05/06/2018)

There are specific protection concerns for vulnerable groups such as children, women, the elderly and people with disabilities. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable to security risks around temporary shelters when displaced by conflict. There is an increased risk of exposure to incidents of rape, sexual assault and gender-based violence, and such incidents go largely underreported. People with disabilities and older people may find leaving their shelters more challenging. Lack of roads and insecurity act as a barrier to accessing relief shelter or aid. Children are at risk of exploitation and abuse, especially when separated from their parents during displacement.

Humanitarian and operational constraints

Humanitarian access is extremely limited across CAR, especially in the regions affected by the conflict. Incidents against humanitarian actors, NGO offices and medical infrastructure are frequently reported. At least 338 security incidents affecting humanitarian access were registered in CAR between January and October, including six aid workers killed (one of them in Alindao) and 21 injured. Some 20 organisations had to temporarily suspend their activities because of security incidents in 2018. (OCHA 07/11/2018, OCHA 06/08/2018)

In Alindao, the bad state of the road network and the presence of armed men have been identified as access constraints. Cases where members of armed groups tried to extort money from the trucks delivering aid were also reported, and armed escort by MINUSCA is sometimes necessary to access the city. (UNICEF/ACTED 22/08/2018, ACF/UNICEF 30/09/2018, IOM 30/09/2018)

Aggravating factors

Food insecurity

Food availability and access in the country are a major humanitarian concern because of limited food production and market activities as well as disrupted livelihoods. Protracted conflict has considerably limited the areas available for cultivation and access to fields, leading to years of reduced harvest. Tensions between farmers and pastoralists, as well as general insecurity interrupting regular transhumance movements, have affected livestock production. The presence of armed men and frequent armed attacks along main roads have limited food procurement across the country, leading to higher food prices.

The conflict has also disrupted livelihoods and limited job opportunities, reducing household purchasing power. Food prices have risen in recent months, especially in the areas most affected by conflict, where the population depends on food assistance.

Around 75% of Central Africans rely on agriculture as their main source of food and income. As a result, 1.9 million people, about 43% of the country's total population, are considered to be food insecure (IPC phase 3 and above) in 2018. In Alindao, 60% of the population are in crisis (IPC phase 3) and 10% face an emergency situation (IPC phase 4). (FEWSNET 27/11/2018, IPC 29/10/2018, FAO 20/10/2018, Al Jazeera 21/11/2018)

Contextual information

Drivers of the current conflict

Fighting in CAR is characterised by overlapping tensions between ex-Séléka and anti-Balaka, Muslim and Christian communities, and pastoralists and farmers. Alliances shift as armed groups attempt to gain or consolidate control over territories and resources.

The identification of ethnic and religious groups with particular armed groups is leading to the isolation of communities. Local media and statements by armed groups' leaders contribute to the perception that one or another community is responsible for the atrocities committed by armed groups, even if they do not act in the name of the community.

Some witnesses reported that the attack on the Catholic Mission IDP camp by the UPC was in retaliation for attacks against Muslims by the anti-Balaka militias earlier that day. (France 24 17/11/2018, RFI 26/11/2018) The instrumentalization of religion by different actors engaged in the conflict has contributed to the rise of intercommunal violence and social hostilities. (Africa News 26/11/2018)

The presence of gold mines and diamonds in the area surrounding Alindao and its strategic position on one of the main roads connecting to the south-eastern parts of the country are also important drivers of the conflict between armed groups. (Jeune Afrique 17/11/2018, IPSI 13/08/2013)

Recent violence against civilians

On 31 October and 1 November, three IDP sites in Batangafo town were set on fire following violent clashes between armed groups. More than 30,000 people were displaced while a market, an education centre, some 5,141 houses and around 80% of the WASH infrastructure were destroyed. At least 20 people were injured, more than 10,000 sought refuge in the MSF hospital and hundreds fled to the bush. (OCHA 08/11/2018, Oxfam 08/11/2018, MINUSCA 07/11/2018) There are also reports of 10,000 people pre-emptively fleeing the city of Bocaranga, Ouham-Pendé prefecture, in November, fearing an attack on the city. (OCHA 27/11/2018)

History of conflict and relevant stakeholders

The conflict in CAR began in 2012, when President Francois Bozizè was overthrown by the Séléka, an alliance of rebel militia groups made up of mainly Muslim Fulani fighters from north-eastern CAR.

Having overthrown Bozizè, the Séléka, led by Michel Djotodia, took power for a short period of time in 2013. The Séléka was then dissolved and split into different groups before reforming under the name ex-Séléka in 2014.

To counter the violence of ex-Séléka, some self-defence militias organised themselves locally into groups called the anti-Balaka. The anti-Balaka established themselves as the defenders of Christian Central Africans, who had been a target of ex-Séléka violence.

As the tension between Séléka factions and anti-Balaka increased, communities in CAR started to arm, without joining either of the two main parties involved in the conflict. Fighting between the two factions soon evolved in intercommunal clashes across the country.

Alindao is a former stronghold of the Union pour la Paix en Centrafrique (UPC), led by Ali Darassa, and clashes with the anti-Balaka in Basse Kotto are frequent. Furthermore, since May 2017, violent clashes between several of rival armed groups present in the area, including the GSAU (inside the city) and the GBK (on the main axis around the city), have led to important population movement. According to observation from local authorities and NGOs in the field, 57 of the 71 neighbourhoods of Alindao are uninhabited due to security issues. (ACF/UNICEF 30/09/2018)

The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission (MINUSCA)

MINUSCA took over peacekeeping operations from the France-backed African Union forces (MISCA) in September 2014. Some 13,500 uniformed personnel and 1,162 civilian personnel are deployed in the country. (MINUSCA 01/11/2018) On 15 November 2017, its mandate was extended until 15 November 2018. However, due to political differences among the Security Council's permanent members regarding Russia's political engagement in CAR, the Council was unable to reach an agreement on the renewal of MINUSCA's mandate on 15 November and the mission was only extended for one month, leaving time for further negotiations. (Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect 21/11/2018, Jeune Afrique 17/11/2018)

The uncertainty of the mandate is an additional challenge for MINUSCA at a time when it faces increased attacks against its personnel on the ground. The government and some of the local population have recently raised questions about the role of MINUSCA in the country. (Jeune Afrique 17/11/2018) In Alindao, where some 50 soldiers were present when the attack took place, MINUSCA was accused of standing by and not being able to prevent civilian casualties. (RFI 21/11/2018, MINUSCA 23/11/2018)

Criticisms against MINUSCA's inability to protect civilians also followed previous violence in Alindao in 2017, when too few soldiers were sent too late. (Amnesty International 08/09/2017, RJDH 09/05/2017)

Key characteristics

- **Demographic profile:** 20,000 inhabitants in Alindao town prior to the insecurity. However, increased violence in recent months has led to population movement. There are more than 55,000 IDPs in Basse Kotto prefecture, including 35,000 in Alindao. The IDP camp in the Catholic Mission of Alindao sheltered most of them with around 7,000 women, 6,000 men and 6,000 children under five years old. (UNICEF/ACTED 22/08/2018)
- **Food security figures.** In August 2018, around 46,484 people were facing IPC Phase 3 in Alindao, while 7,747 people were in IPC Phase 4. (IPC 29/10/2018)
- **Nutrition levels.** According to a SMART survey conducted in August, the GAM rate is at 9.5% while the SAM rate is at 3% in Alindao city. (ACF/UNICEF 30/09/2018) Those numbers rise respectively to 16.2% and 5.9% in AFAPS IDP camps (ACF/UNICEF 30/09/2018), to 16.7% and 2.9% in PK3 IDP camp (ACF/UNICEF 30/09/2018), and to 17.8% and 4.5% in the Catholic Mission IDP camp. (ACF/UNICEF 30/09/2018)

- **Health statistics:** Around 27% of all health infrastructure in the country have been partially damaged or destroyed by the conflict. In Alindao sub-prefecture, there is one district hospital, five health centres and nine health outposts. (OMS/Health Ministry 03/2017) Immunisation coverage has been under 50% over the past five years (OCHA 06/11/2018)
- **WASH statistics:** Only half the population has access to drinkable water and more than 34% practice open-air defecation. (OCHA 01/11/2018)

Response capacity

Local and national response capacity

The government has limited capacity to respond to developments in Alindao. At least one national NGO (AFAPS) is present in Alindao and is managing one of the IDP camp in the city.

International response capacity

The presence of humanitarian actors in Alindao is limited. Caritas and Cordaid are among the few INGOs responding to the needs of the population in the city. Additional funding is urgently needed to scale up the emergency response. This year's \$516 million CAR appeal was only 48.2% funded. (OCHA 23/11/2018)

Information gaps and needs

- Lack of information regarding sectoral needs of the population following the attack.
- Most of the data available have been collected between a few months to a few years before the attack, following previous waves of violence.
- Though several assessments have been conducted, the limited geographical scope and different timeframes make it difficult to have a clear picture of the overall situation.
- Lack of information about host communities affected by the displacements.
- The last population census organised in the country was in 2003.

Lessons learned

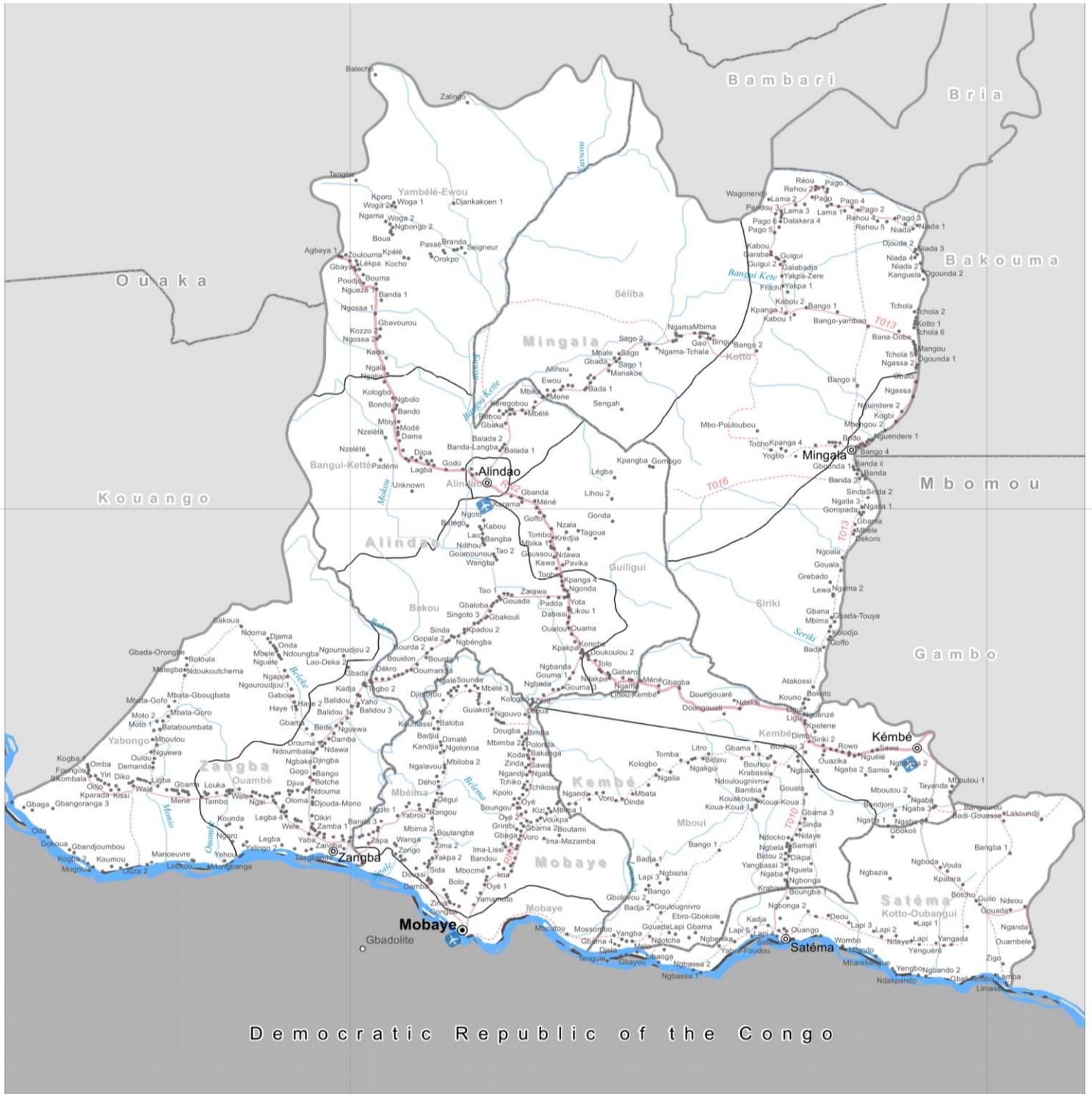
Food and water resources in the host areas are often strained by the arrival of displaced populations.

Activities supporting the livelihoods of both IDPs and host community members are important to prevent tension and ensure sustainable reconstruction of the affected areas.

Supporting host communities is crucial, as most IDPs depend greatly on community support systems.

In the past, attacks against one community have often led to counterattacks against members of another community. It is therefore important to carry out activities to ensure peaceful coexistence between communities in areas affected by the conflict.

Map of Basse-Kotto prefecture



Légende

★ Capitale	— Route primaire	▭ Limite internationale
⊙ Chef-lieu de préfecture	— Route secondaire	▭ Limite de préfecture
⊙ Chef-lieu de sous-préfecture	- - - Piste	▭ Limite de sous-préfecture
• Village	— Cours d'eau permanent	▭ Limite de commune
✈ Aéroport	— Cours d'eau intermittent	■ Etendue d'eau

Date de création: 25 mars 2015

0 10 20 30 km

Echelle: 1: 700 000
Datum/Projection: GCS_WCS_84

Source: SIGCAF, WRI, OCHA
Contact: ocha.im.car@gmail.com
https://humanitarianresponse.info
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