

Briefing Note – 19 May 2017

Central African Republic acaps

Conflict in Alindao and Bangassou



Need for international assistance	Not required	Low	Moderate X	Significant	Urgent
Expected impact	Insignificant	Minor X	Moderate	Significant	Major

Key findings

Anticipated scope and scale Although clashes have stopped in both Alindao and Bangassou, the continued presence of groups responsible for the conflict indicates further violence is likely. Long-term displacement could disrupt planting activities (rice planting starts in May), and lead to further food insecurity.

Key priorities

- Shelter** for the displaced and for those whose houses have been destroyed. Needs are particularly high due to the current rainy season.
- WASH**, especially safe water, for the displaced
- Food** for the displaced as well as for those whose livelihoods have been damaged
- Protection** if conflict persists

Humanitarian constraints

- Bridges into Bangassou have been destroyed and roads were blocked. Telephone lines were cut in both Bangassou and Alindao.
- Continuing insecurity affects access
- Limited funding and high needs dispersed throughout the country limits the resources available to respond

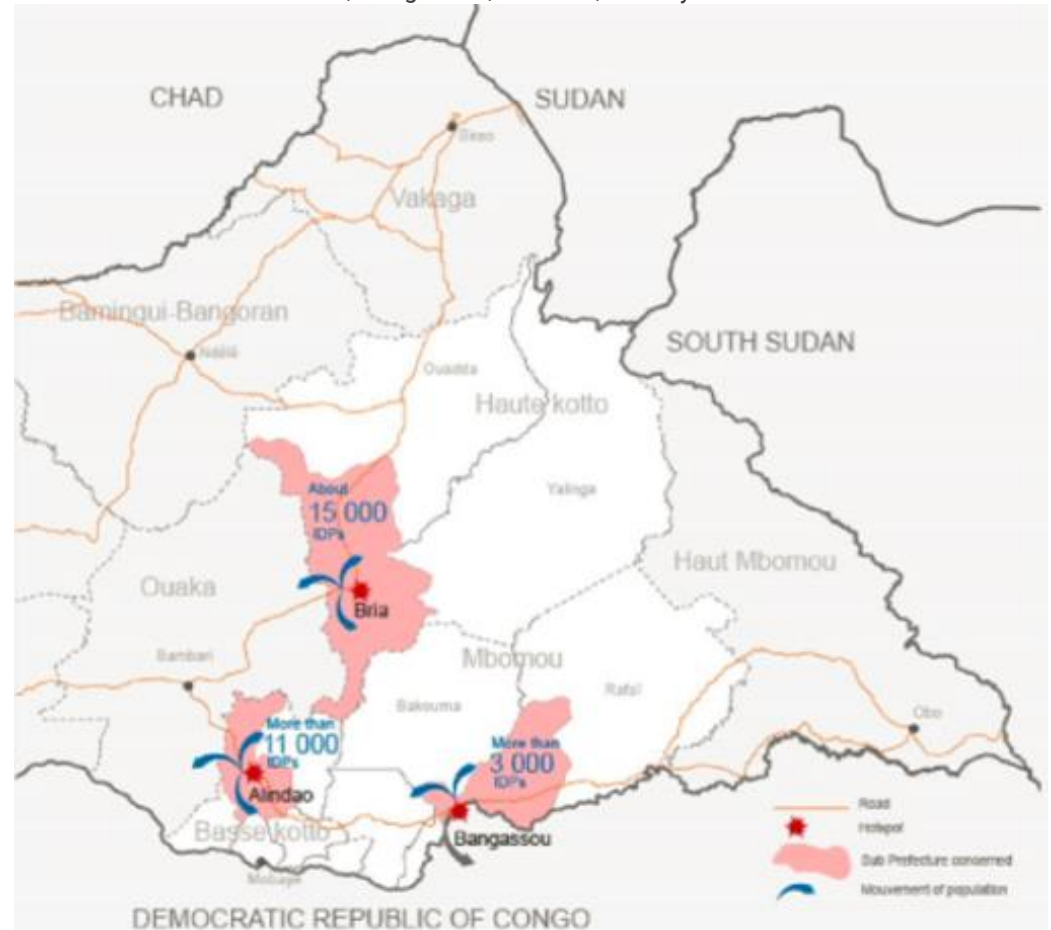
Limitations

Sectoral needs of both displaced and non-displaced people in Alindao and Bangassou

Crisis overview

A spike in fighting over resources occurred in Alindao, Basse-Kotto over 7–9 May, with at least 56 people killed and over 11,000 displaced. In nearby Bangassou, Mbomou prefecture, armed groups killed at least 26 people, with at least 3,000 displaced in CAR, 2,750 fleeing to DRC and 25,000 in need of humanitarian assistance. Government response is lacking and there is no evidence of humanitarian assistance reaching affected populations, excluding emergency healthcare.

IDPs from conflict in Alindao, Bangassou, and Bria, 18 May 2017



Source: OCHA CAR on Twitter 18/05/2017

Crisis impact

Alindao, Basse Kotto prefecture

Conflict over 7–9 May between anti-balaka, the Popular Front for the Renaissance of Central Africa (FPRC), and l'Unité pour la Paix en Centrafrique (UPC) in Alindao town and surrounding villages has left around 130 people dead. Fulani were targeted by the FPRC during the attack, as the UPC is predominantly Fulani (UN Radio 16/05/2017; Radio Ndeke Luka 11/05/2017). Houses have been burned down, and more than 11,000 people displaced due to the conflict (OCHA 17/05/2017; OCHA 15/05/2017). Fighting involving the same actors has since continued on around Alindao, in Banda-Koloyammba and Belengo villages, leading to an unconfirmed number of casualties (OCHA 15/05/2017).

Bangassou, Mboumou prefecture

On 13 May, suspected anti-balaka attacked Bangassou town, leaving conflicting reports of between 26 and 115 people dead. Reasons for the attack are still unclear, as no opposing forces were in Bangassou. However, Tokoyo, a Muslim quarter, was targeted (RFI 18/05/2017; UN Radio 16/05/2017; Opex 360 18/05/2017). During the fighting, 1,000 people sought refuge in a mosque, 1,500 in a cathedral, and 500 in a hospital (OCHA 15/05/2017; RJDH 10/05/2017). 3,000 people are reportedly displaced in CAR, while some 2,750 fled to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). More than 25,000 people in Bangassou are reportedly in need of humanitarian assistance (OCHA 17/05/2017; UNHCR 16/05/2017).

Since October 2016, fighting over the control of resources between ex-Seleka factions, as well as some anti-balaka factions, has occurred in Haute-Kotto, Ouaka and parts of Mbomou and Basse Kotto prefectures. Peaks in this fighting have resulted in the displacement of more than 10,000 people, dozens of civilian casualties, and extremely limited access to conflict-affected areas (OCHA 10/04/2017; OCHA 23/03/2017; Radio Ndeke Luka 01/05/2017; RJDH 30/01/2017).

Attacks should be expected to continue in areas around Bangassou and Alindao, as the same actors attacked various villages around the area before (MSF 15/05/2017; OCHA 15/05/2017).

Shelter: The displaced need shelter assistance. In Alindao, 11,119 people have been displaced, while at least 3,000 were displaced in Bangassou (OCHA 17/05/2017). Some of those displaced in Alindao have been sleeping in the open (Radio Ndeke Luka 11/05/2017). Roughly 70 houses in Bangassou were damaged by fire. Shelter and NFI assistance is required for those whose houses have been looted and destroyed (OCHA 15/05/2017).

WASH: IDPs are in need of safe water; it is likely that they are using unsafe water sources (OCHA 17/05/2017; JIPS 2011).

Food: The displaced will be in need of food assistance: the 3,000 IDPs in Bangassou have reportedly had limited access to food since fighting started last week, likely because they cannot access their food supplies (OCHA 17/05/2017). Damage to livelihoods has been reported after looting and destruction of stores in Bangassou. Tokoyo district was especially targeted and the town's central market destroyed (Radio Ndeke Luka 16/05/2017).

Protection: Heavy civilian casualties have been reported, with reports of ethnic and religious groups being targeted by different actors (RFI 18/05/2017; UN Radio 16/05/2017; Opex 360 18/05/2017). The casualty rates reported are extremely high for conflict incidents in CAR (MSF 15/05/2017; Reuters 17/05/2017).

Vulnerable groups affected

The nature of the conflict in CAR makes protection needs high for the whole population, as different armed groups target different religious or ethnic groups. Conflict in Alindao and Bangassou involves factions that target Christian, Muslim, and Fulani people.

Displaced children face an increased risk of acute malnutrition, as access to food and health services is disrupted (UNHCR 2011).

Humanitarian and operational constraints

In Bangassou, anti-balaka took control of the town and humanitarian access was impossible (OCHA 15/05/2017; RJDH 10/05/2017). The mosque was inaccessible to humanitarian workers for two days (MSF 15/05/2017). Armed groups reportedly destroyed all of the bridges Bangassou and occupied roads into the city to limit MINUSCA response (OCHA 15/05/2017; RJDH 10/05/2017).

By 15 May, MINUSCA had retaken most of the town, improving humanitarian access, and the armed forces reportedly agreed to withdraw on 17 May, although there is no confirmation this has happened (MINUSCA 17/05/2017; Radio Vaticana 17/05/2017).

Apart from emergency medical services, all other humanitarian activities in Bangassou were suspended following the attacks. Humanitarian organisations often have to reduce or suspend activities in conflict areas due to repeated incidents of thefts and violence.

(OCHA 15/05/2017; Radio Ndeke Luka 11/05/2017). 61 incidents against humanitarians were reported across CAR in the first four months of the year, including 21 in April: one of the highest rates in the world (OHCHR 16/05/2017; INSO on Twitter 16/05/2017).

Telephone lines were cut in both Bangassou and Alindao, limiting the ability to receive accurate information from inside the cities, limiting the assessment of needs. No information is available on whether the telephone lines have been restored (RJDH 15/05/2017; RJDH 09/05/2017).

The rainy season has started, making access by road to some communities very difficult or impossible. Some areas are reportedly only accessible by boat (IOM 16/08/2016, UNICEF 12/08/2016). The Mbomou River – the border with DRC will rise, making crossing to DRC more difficult. Rains are expected to intensify through May and remain so until October (FAO 05/2017).

Potential aggravating factors

Lean season and food insecurity

Normal lean season runs from March to July, but started two months earlier due to recurring instability and exhausted stocks following three years of conflict (Fewsnet 21/12/2016). 60% of households in Basse Kotto and 47% of households in Mbomou were food insecure as of November 2016 (WFP 12/2016).

Disrupted agricultural activities

Rice planting, a staple food, starts in May and the maize growing season is ongoing. Maize is one of the main staple foods. Insecurity might disrupt agricultural activities, and lead to longer term food needs (FAO 21/11/2016).

Displacement of population in Basse-Koto and Mbomou prefectures

The displaced population has increased since the beginning of the year due to recurring violence in Basse-Kotto and Mbomou. As of April, there were 9,800 IDPs in host communities in Basse-Kotto compared to 7,500 in January. In Mbomou, 5,000 people were living in the bush in April and 15,600 IDPs lived in host communities, compared to 10,800 IDPs in host communities in January (UNHCR 23/02/2017, UNHCR 11/05/2017).

Contextual information

Drivers of the current conflict

In October 2016, a new coalition of ex-Seleka factions, grouping FPRC, Mouvement Patriotique pour la Centrafrique (MPC) and Rassemblement Patriotique pour le Renouveau de Centrafrique (RPRC), was formed, under the military leadership of FPRC. Their ultimate goal is to partition the country and achieve independence of the mostly Muslim northeastern regions of CAR. UPC – another ex-Seleka faction – rejects this objective and has refused to join the new coalition (GSDRC 01/2016, IRIN 24/02/2017).

The FPRC-led coalition therefore aims to oust UPC from Ouaka, Haute-Kotto, and other territories in central and eastern CAR. These areas are rich in mines and coffee plantations and host cattle corridors. Fighting first took place in November 2016 around Bria in Haute-Kotto, where mines are located, and expanded to roads to Bambari, Ouaka, in January. Control of roads is vital to raise barricades and income (IRIN 24/02/2017).

UPC leaders left Bambari in February at MINUSCA's demand, to avoid fighting in the town. They moved south to Basse-Kotto and Mbomou (RFI 06/04/2017). Since March, fighting has occurred near mining sites north of Mbomou prefecture, which have since fallen under FPRC control (RJDH 24/04/2017). Violence is now spreading to the border with DRC and to the south of Bambari in Alindao, Basse-Kotto. The motivation for the fighting in Bangassou on 13 May is unclear as neither UPC nor FPRC were reported to have forces in the town (opex360 05/18/2017).

The UPC is dominated by Fulani, and the FPRC and RPRC are dominated by Gula and Runga ethnic groups, which means the conflict often descends into ethnic targeting (IRIN 24/02/2017).

Relevant stakeholders

Seleka was a coalition of mostly Muslim armed groups who ended President Bozize's regime in 2013. In late 2013, following human rights violations, the international community compelled the dissolution of Seleka. Seleka, originally an alliance of forces, ultimately fragmented into different groups, including the UPC and FPRC. These groups have different political agendas.

UPC was created in 2014, mostly as a Fulani self-defence group in eastern CAR, against extortion by anti-balaka but also by ex-Seleka groups (GSDRC 01/2016). They set up their headquarters in Bambari, but MINUSCA forced them to leave in February 2017. They now control territories in Basse-Kotto and Mbomou, allegedly smuggling resources from mining to DRC (La Presse 17/05/2017).

FPRC-led coalition was formed in October 2016 and comprises FPRC, RPRC and MPC. FPRC – led by Nouredine Adam, former number 2 of Seleka, was created in 2014 and wants to partition the country. RPRC is based in some neighbourhoods of Bria and is mostly made up of members of the Gula ethnic group. RPRC initially opposed partition. MPC was created in 2015 and is mostly active around Kaga-Bandoro in Nana-Grebizi (GSDRC 01/2016).

Anti-balaka are mostly animist or Christian militia who emerged in 2013 to counter Seleka violence. Since January, some structured anti-balaka have forged alliances with the FPRC-led coalition (IRIN 24/02/2017).

MINUSCA is a 13,000-strong peacekeeping mission operating in CAR since September 2014 with a mandate to ensure the protection of civilians. In February, MINUSCA forces took a more active role in attempting to prevent fighting in Bambari (Reuters 12/02/2017).

International and neighbouring countries' relationship to the conflict

French forces withdrew in October 2016, transferring some of their troops to the EU training mission (Jeune Afrique 10/01/2017).

Ugandan forces, engaged in the fight against LRA in southeastern CAR announced their withdrawal by May 2017 (Newsweek 18/04/2017).

US forces are also in the process of withdrawing from southeastern CAR as their goal to deter LRA was achieved (Reuters 20/04/2017).

Response capacity

Local and national response capacity

The government has limited to no capacity to respond to developments in Alindao and Bangassou. Local response is not coordinated and relies on various local actors. 1 million FCFA (1,500 euros) was raised by residents of Mbomou, Basse-Kotto, and Haut Mbomou for humanitarian assistance in Bangassou and Alindao, though it is unclear how it has or will be used (RJDH 16/05/2017). The Catholic mission in Alindao is reportedly registering IDPs (Radio Ndeke Luka 10/05/2017).

International response capacity

The Red Cross, two national NGOs, six international NGOs and 3 UN agencies are present in Bangassou. MSF is responding to health needs in Bangassou and the Red

Cross is present in both Alindao and Bangassou (Jeune Afrique 12/05/2017; MSF 15/05/2017; Reuters 17/05/2017). There are only two a WASH partners in both Basse-Kotto, and one in Mbomou (WASH Cluster 04/2017).

The closest IDP sites are in Bambari and Bria, a significant distance from both Alindao and Bangassou. Assistance for IDPs will therefore have to reach IDPs who are not in IDP camps displaced but dispersed throughout the prefectures (Shelter Cluster 31/03/2017).

Only 16% of the Humanitarian Response Plan is funded (OCHA 15/05/2017).

As conflict occurs with regular frequency throughout CAR, capacity for response is further constrained due to the necessity to respond to each outbreak of violence.

Information gaps and needs

- Information on sectoral needs of IDPs and those not displaced.
- Information on the specific needs of the 25,000 people reported as being in need in Bangassou (OCHA 17/05/2017).

Lessons learned

- Displacement lasts between several hours to several months; this difference influences needs. Short-term displacement leads to interruptions of economic activities and loss of goods (looting etc), but do not have the same impact as long-term displacement. According to a study of IDPs in Bamingui-Bangoran prefecture by JIPS in 2011, the displaced travel a significant distance, with 33% having walked for one day, compared to 8% travelling only one hour (JIPS 2011).
- WASH and livelihood assistance were identified as primary needs for people displaced by conflict in Bamingui-Bangoran in 2011 (JIPS 2011).
- Psychosocial and mental health problems are of concern in conflict situations (Martz, 2010). Primary support networks and the most effective treatment for psychological trauma associated with violence in CAR was the community (JIPS 2011).

Key characteristics

Key indicators	CAR	Basse-Kotto	Mbomou
Total population	5,507,257 (2016 est.)	249,150 (2003)	164,009 (2003)
% population in rural areas	60% (2015)	87.66% (2003)	80.76% (2003)
Gender and age distribution of population	51% female, 49% male (2016 est.)	50.6% female, 49.4% male (2003)	50.4% female, 49.6% male (2003)
State capital	Bangui	Mobaye	Bangassou
Percentage of population using solid fuels for cooking	97%	-	-
WASH		-	-
Improved sanitation access	21.8%		
Drinking water access	68.5% (2015 est.)		
Health			
Under five mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	139.2 (2010)	250 (2010)	182 (2010)
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	88.4 deaths (2016 est.)		
Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births)	882 (2015 est.)		
Food security	315,900 IPC Phase 3 (2017)		
Literacy rates	36.8% (2015 est.)	42.4% (2003)	51.9% (2003)

Sources: National Census (2003), CIA World Factbook, WHO , Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves, IPC Info