

# CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Rising needs in a forgotten crisis



## KEY FACTS

Population: **4.8 million**

**2.8 million** people in need of humanitarian aid

**1.9 million** facing crisis or worse levels of food insecurity (IPC 3+)

**641,000** people internally displaced

**622,000** Central African refugees

**188th** (of 189 countries) for human development

**159th** (of 195 countries) for capability to prevent and mitigate epidemics

**68%** of women and girls married before the age of 18

**160th** (of 167 countries) for women's equality

**179th** (of 181 countries) for resilience to climate change

**3/5** score for severity of access constraints

**64%** of funding received for 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan

Above: Hawaou Ibrahim, 15, attended an IRC-run youth program in Bangui, Central African Republic after she and her family returned from Cameroon, having fled armed violence.

## PROBABILITY

**7** HUMAN THREAT

**4** NATURAL THREAT

## IMPACT

**10** CONSTRAINTS ON COUNTRY RESPONSE

**10** EXISTING PRESSURES ON POPULATION

**CAR's inclusion on Watchlist 2021 is driven both by the persistent armed conflict within the country and the likelihood that any shock will have a particularly severe impact given the extreme vulnerability of the population and the country's limited response capacity.**

CAR saw major conflict after armed groups overran the capital in 2013 and, while the situation has since calmed, armed groups continue to control large swathes of territory, driving widespread instability. Most armed groups continue to observe the 2019 peace deal but it has come under growing pressure as political tensions intensified in 2020. Over half of the population is already expected to need humanitarian assistance in 2021 ([OCHA](#)) and this number could rise rapidly if there is any recurrence of major conflict or natural disasters. CAR will enter 2021 days after it holds both presidential and legislative elections, which could spark further instability and challenge efforts to respond to the country's crises.

"The Central African Republic is one of the world's most forgotten crises. With 40% of people in need of critical humanitarian aid, the attention and funding the country receives from the world is not proportionate to the need. Years of violence coupled with the impact of COVID-19 have led to a near doubling of the rates of violence against women and girls. The world must wake up to the situation in CAR and do more to help the most vulnerable."

- Elisabeth Mekougou Obama Epse Ndjella  
Women's Protection and Empowerment Coordinator, IRC  
Central African Republic



## HUMANITARIAN RISKS IN 2021

- ▶ **Acute needs are already at the highest level for the past five years due to a combination of conflict, COVID-19, economic conditions and natural events.** 40% of the population faces acute needs, more than at any point in the last five years ([OCHA](#)). COVID-19 is having a major impact, particularly on economic well being. Increased controls on movements across the border with Cameroon have pushed up the prices of imported rice, oil and sugar. Alongside crop diseases, renewed conflict and poor rains, COVID-19 has severely compounded food insecurity, leaving 1.9 million people (40% of the population) facing crisis (IPC 3) or worse levels of food insecurity, including 408,000 at emergency (IPC 4) levels ([IPC Info](#)). This figure is expected to rise to 2.3 million people in mid-2021 ([IPC Info](#)). The pandemic has also had a major impact on the safety of women and girls. Restrictions related to COVID-19, for example on movement and employment, have also prompted a near doubling in the number of cases of violence against women and girls ([OCHA](#)).
- ▶ **Armed groups continue to control much of the country, driving persistent volatility and ongoing threats to civilians and humanitarian access.** CAR has seen ongoing instability since an alliance of armed groups overran the capital in 2013, causing a dramatic spike in conflict. As a result, a quarter of the population is displaced - internally or abroad - with more than 640,000 people currently displaced internally ([OCHA](#)). Most, but not all, armed groups signed a peace deal in Khartoum in 2019 but conflict has persisted in parts of the country since then, albeit at far lower levels than in 2013-2014. Armed groups in the west of the country have been particularly disruptive during 2020, but seasonal violence also occurs along transhumance routes, as herders move their cattle to pasture ([OCHA](#)). The run-up to the planned December 2020 elections has been a key factor driving instability in 2020. If the election results are disputed or the vote is delayed, for example due to COVID-19, then political tensions could drive conflict in 2021 and further threaten humanitarian access.
- ▶ **Threats to the safety of humanitarians are growing.** There have been over 40% more incidents affecting humanitarians in the first ten months of 2020 than over the same period in 2019 ([OCHA](#)). So far in 2020, nine aid workers have been killed in addition to 21 injured and nine kidnapped, placing CAR firmly in the top ten globally on all three fronts ([AWSO](#)). CAR is also just one of eight countries that [ACAPS](#) gave a maximum score of 3/3 for the level of violence against humanitarian personnel, facilities and assets, contributing to an overall environment of “high” access constraints - though physical impediments such as poor roads are an important factor too.
- ▶ **CAR will be particularly affected by any shocks that do occur in 2021.** The country is one of just two countries (along with Somalia) on the Watchlist to score a maximum of ten for both the existing vulnerability of the population and the country's lack of response capacity. CAR also ranks in the top five countries most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change ([ND-GAIN](#)) and there is a persistent risk of natural events sparking new crises like the major flooding that displaced 100,000 people in late 2019 ([REACH](#)).

### THE IRC IN CAR

The IRC has been working in the Central African Republic since 2006. The IRC aids conflict-affected and internally displaced communities through emergency relief, food distributions, healthcare, psychosocial support to women survivors of violence, and building and restoring clean water sources. We also support children's well-being by building and supporting schools and safe spaces for children to learn and play. Learn more about the [IRC's Central African Republic response](#).

