



unicef 
for every child

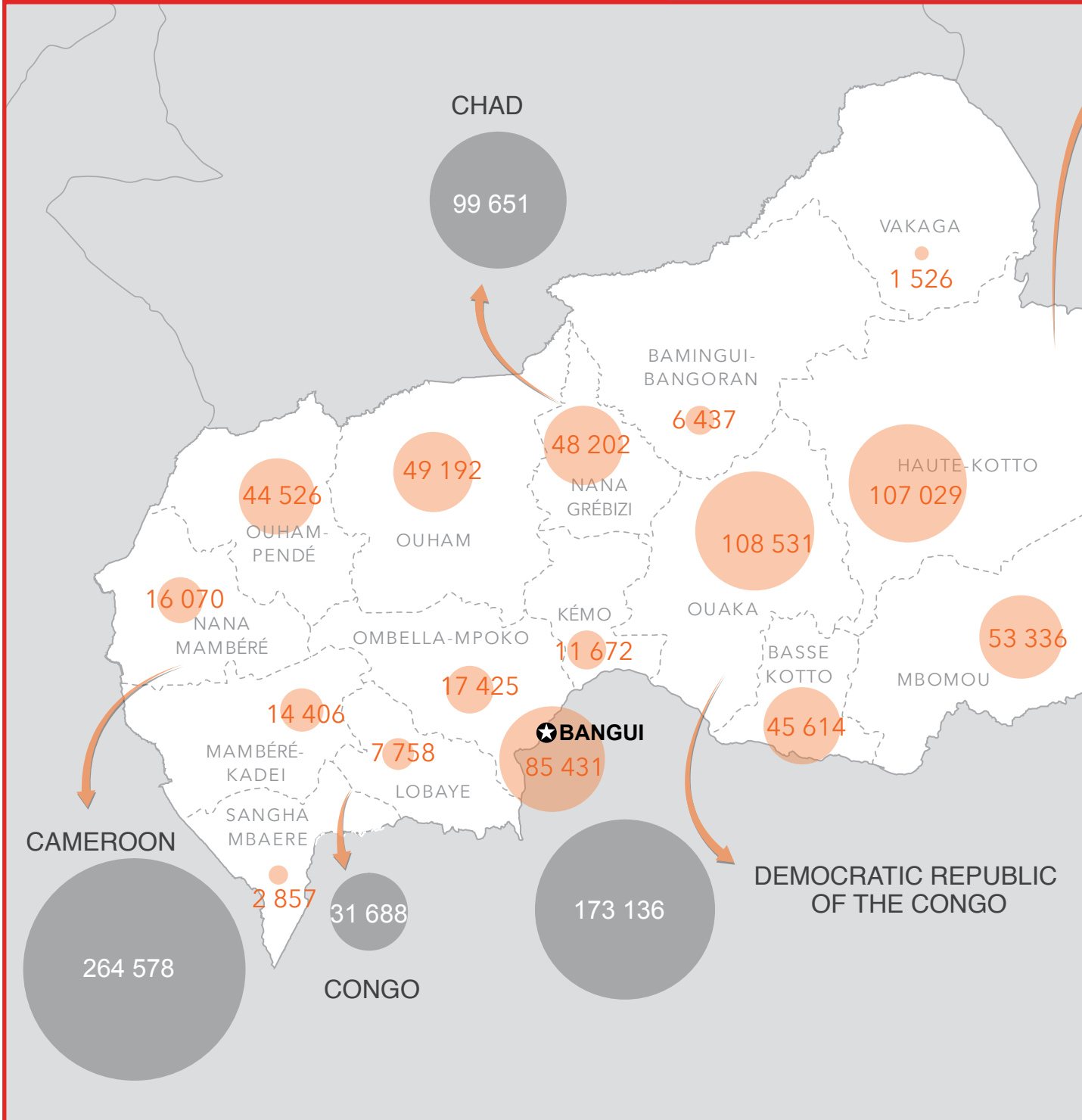
EMBARGOED UNTIL 00:01 GMT 30 NOVEMBER 2018

UNICEF **CHILD ALERT** | November 2018

CRISIS IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

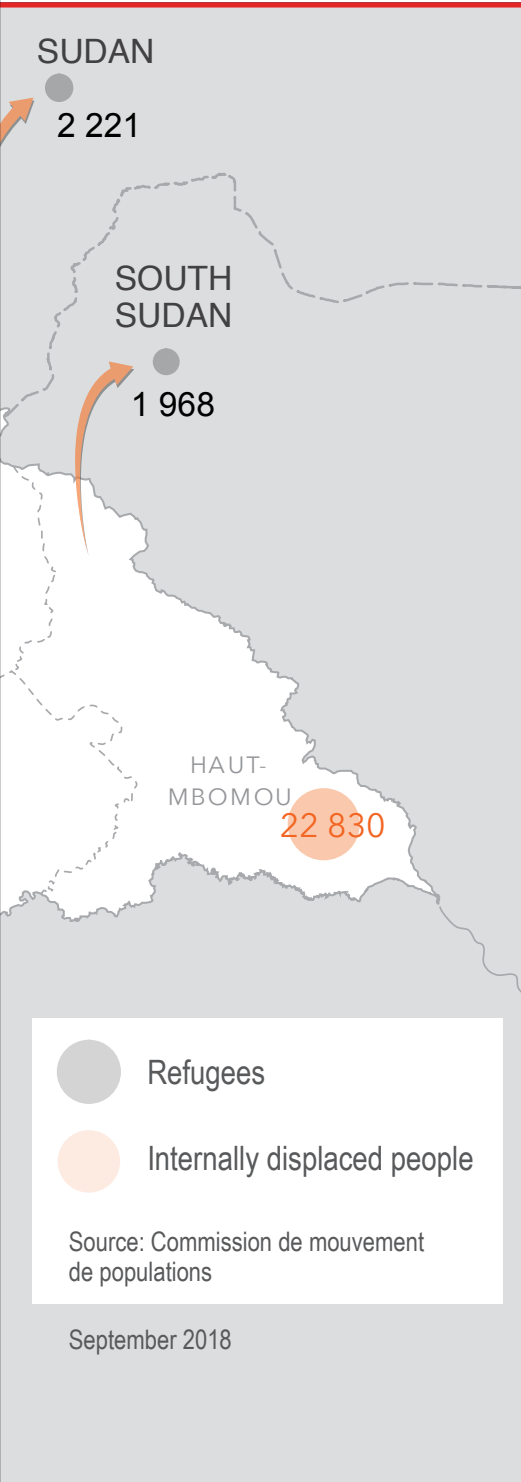
In a neglected emergency, children need aid,
protection – and a future

Central African Republic



Source: OCHA, UNHCR.

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.



In this Child Alert

- Overview: Resurgent conflict, plus poverty, equals danger for children 2
- 1. Children and families displaced and under attack 7
- 2. Alarming malnutrition rates – and the worst may be yet to come 9
- 3. Education in emergencies: Learning under fire 11
- 4. Protecting children and young people from lasting harm 13
- 5. The urgent need for security and peace 16
- 6. Funding the emergency response 20



OVERVIEW: Resurgent conflict, plus poverty, equals danger for children



In December 2013, Bangui, the capital of the Central African Republic (CAR), descended into a brutal bloodbath. The violence fleetingly made international headlines, leading to warnings of a failed state and possible genocide before it gradually diminished.

But now the few early signs of recovery and rebuilding in CAR have given way to a dramatic resurgence in fighting that has enveloped parts of the country previously spared from the violence. Today, life is even harsher and more fraught with danger for children than it was at the peak of the crisis.

And judging by the amount of attention CAR gets, barely anyone is watching what is happening across this vast, landlocked nation at the heart of Africa.

Two out of three children in CAR need humanitarian assistance. One in four children is displaced or a refugee. The skeletal bodies of children fortunate enough to make it to the nutrition ward at CAR's only paediatric hospital virtually scream 'famine.' Almost every Central

African child needs protection from the fighting and its far-reaching effects.

Children who joined armed groups because their parents had been killed or because they were so poor – and who eventually left because they were terrified, or hungry, or realized it was a dead-end – desperately need a break, an opportunity, the prospect of a decent life. Girls whose bodies have been brutalized – whether by armed militants or because they were driven to selling their bodies by mind-numbing poverty – urgently need care and support.

Above all, the children of CAR need security. The places they go for protection and support – including schools, hospitals and places of worship – are increasingly under attack by the armed groups that control and terrorize four fifths of the country. Reaching children with assistance is dangerous, and sometimes deadly.

At the same time, the crisis is unfolding within an acute development emergency. CAR ranks 188th out of

“This crisis is taking place in one of the poorest and least developed countries in the world, and one of the most dangerous for humanitarian workers. Conditions for children are desperate.”

Christine Muhigana, UNICEF Representative,
Central African Republic



© UNICEF/UN0239450/GILBERTSON VII PHOTO

189 countries in the United Nations Human Development Index, a composite indicator measuring life expectancy, income and education. Neonatal death rates are the second highest in the world. Nearly half of the population does not have access to clean water. Three quarters lack basic sanitation. And the country's school dropout rate is a staggering 70 per cent.

Sadly, there are more people living in extreme poverty in CAR now than there were a decade ago.

The humanitarian crisis and the development emergency exacerbate each other, preying upon some of the most vulnerable and neglected children in the world. If CAR's children and families are ever to turn the page on years of recurrent crises, they will need far more emergency

relief and a development strategy that functions with all the urgency of an emergency response. For the next decade, at least, that strategy will require multi-year funding that is predictable and flexible enough to surmount inevitable setbacks and shocks.

"The children of the Central African Republic have been abandoned for too long," says Christine Muhigana, the UNICEF Representative in CAR. *"They need attention and help now, and they will need it for the long run."*

The following pages highlight the situation of the children and young people who require attention and aid across a range of sectors in CAR. They deserve nothing less.



CRISIS IN CAR, BY THE NUMBERS

A neglected, dangerous and deteriorating crisis for children:

- **Two out of three Central African children require humanitarian assistance** – 1.5 million children, up from 1.2 million in 2016.
- Displacement is spreading. There are **almost 643,000 internally displaced Central Africans**, up from 369,000 in June 2015.
- **More than 573,000 Central Africans have sought refuge** in neighbouring countries.
- **Malnutrition is intensifying.** The number of children who are expected to suffer from severe acute malnutrition has steadily risen, from 32,348 in 2014 to more than 43,000 projected for 2019.
- **CAR suffers an ‘extremely alarming’ level of hunger**, ranking 119th out of 119 countries on the 2018 Global Hunger Index.
- **The number of attacks against aid workers more than quadrupled – from 67 incidents in all of 2017 to 294 in just the first eight and one-half months of 2018.** In 2017, the last year with available data, CAR was world’s fourth most dangerous country for aid workers, after South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Afghanistan.
- **Despite a major upsurge in fighting and displacement, only 44 per cent of UNICEF’s US\$56.5 million target for 2018 humanitarian funding in CAR had been met as of October.** The overall international humanitarian response was just 36 per cent funded as of September.



© UNICEF/JN0239497/GILBERTSON VII PHOTO



© UNICEF/UN0239466/GILBERTSON VII PHOTO

One of the world's least developed and poorest countries:

- Average **life expectancy for Central African children is 52 years** – the world's lowest.
- **Almost half the population does not have access to clean water**, while three quarters lack access to basic sanitation.
- **Fewer than three in five of CAR's children make it through primary school.**
- **More than two thirds of girls are married before they turn 18**, and 29 per cent are married before they turn 15.
- CAR is getting poorer. An estimated **three out of four people live on less than US\$1.90 a day**, up from two out of three a decade ago.
- **And thousands of Central African children, mostly boys, are believed to be in armed groups. Thousands more, mostly girls, are sexually exploited and abused. Insecurity and lack of humanitarian access make the exact numbers difficult to assess.**

One of the world's riskiest countries for infants and pregnant mothers:

- **CAR has the second-highest newborn death rate in the world**, meaning 1 in 24 newborns do not survive their first 28 days. By comparison, the rate in Iceland is 1 in 1,000.
- CAR has the **second-highest maternal mortality ratio, at 882 out of 100,000 live births**. A mother has a 1 in 27 chance of dying due to complications related to pregnancy and childbirth, compared to 1 in 12,900 in Sweden.



© UNICEF/UN0239556/GILBERTSON VII PHOTO

1. Children and families displaced and under attack



In the wake of the Bangui carnage in 2013, peacekeepers from France, the African Union and the United Nations eventually put a lid on the fighting. Hope was tangible. Meeting in Brussels in November 2016, the United Nations and bilateral and institutional donors such as the World Bank, the European Union and the International Monetary Fund pledged to resume investments focused on helping CAR restore peace and security, renew the social contract and revive the economy.

But the euphoria was short-lived. Violence broke out again in late 2016 and intensified in May 2017 – except this time, the fighting was between a dozen or so armed groups, remnants of the Seleka and anti-Balaka forces, battling over cattle routes as well as lands rich in diamonds, gold and uranium.

More often than not, the armed groups target civilians rather than each other. They attack health and education facilities and personnel, mosques and churches, as well as sites where displaced people are living. In some cases, armed groups surround the sites, cutting off virtually all access to humanitarian support and basic services. In some other cases, they infiltrate the sites.

The number of people displaced by the violence is near levels seen at the peak of the violence in 2014. But now

it is far more widespread, with many more families lacking reliable access to food – and, therefore, depending on host communities that are themselves less resilient than they once were.

As of late September 2018, almost 643,000 people were displaced across CAR, up from 369,000 in June 2015. Around three in five live with host families, most of whom are extremely poor. Many children were separated from their parents during the violence, ending up alone in displacement sites or living out in the open.

Unless the fighting winds down, more and more children will be driven to displacement sites or, worse, forced to hide in the bush.

But while the situation is dire, there is still hope.

“This is the only country I know of where Muslim children have Christian names and Christian children have Muslim names,” says Olivier Mirindi-Chiza, who heads the UNICEF field office in Bambari. “Here in Bambari, young people, Christians and Muslims, have organized joint marches calling for peace. I believe the only way towards that peace is through dialogue. It won’t be perfect, but the killing will stop, families can go back home, and children – the future of this country – can finally get the opportunity they so desperately need.”

“Whether by the ex-Seleka or the anti-Balaka, children’s rights are trampled on. Both kill children, use them in fighting [and] attack, loot and occupy their schools.”

Olivier Mirindi-Chiza,
Chief of UNICEF Bambari Field Office



© UNICEF/UN0239466/GILBERTSON VII PHOTO

NO SAFE HAVEN IN AREAS AFFECTED BY CONFLICT

St. Charles Lwanga, a Catholic church, sits at the heart of the Seko displacement site, 80 kilometres east of Bambari, CAR. *“The people thought that by coming here they would be protected because of the presence of the priest, but they were attacked,”* says Celestin Kasse Konejji, the site’s coordinator. *“The priest was killed. Now there is no priest. Even the nuns have left.”*

Konejji, of the national Red Cross in CAR, shudders as he recalls digging graves to bury the 33 people, including six young children, killed in two attacks on 21 March and 3 April 2018. The camp once sheltered both Christians and Muslims who had fled opposing armed groups. Since the attacks, the Muslims have fled. Only a handful of peacekeepers protect the camp, which shelters more than 5,200 people who come from 14 neighbouring villages.

On 7 June, about two months after the Seko attacks, Dr. Josue Kenema had just finished performing a Caesarean section at Bambari University Hospital – where he, one other doctor and a handful of health workers serve a population of 220,000 within



© UNICEF/UN0239509/GILBERTSON VII PHOTO

a 100-kilometre radius. Dr. Kenema’s patient was hypoglycaemic and falling into a coma. An injured militant was recovering in a ward close by. Suddenly, armed men were firing their weapons outside the operating room.

“The shooting went on for half an hour,” he recalls. *“The hospital became a battlefield.”* Patients cowered for cover, and staff pleaded with the militants to leave them alone.

As these incidents suggest, safety is elusive in areas affected by the conflict in CAR – even in the very places where people expect to be protected from harm.

2. Alarming malnutrition rates – and the worst may be yet to come



Every bed at the malnutrition ward in the Bangui paediatric hospital is occupied, and many hold two children. Every patient in the ward is suffering from severe acute malnutrition (SAM). This life-threatening condition is caused by a decline in food consumption, a bout of illness or a combination of both, leading to rapid weight loss. SAM leaves children up to nine times more likely to die of diseases such as malaria, measles or cholera than those who are well nourished. The children in the Bangui ward suffer from a variety of complications; some have HIV and AIDS.

“It’s worse than anything I’ve ever seen,” says Harriet Dwyer, a UNICEF staff member who has just been to South Sudan, and who previously spent 10 months in north-eastern Nigeria – two other places teetering on the brink of famine.

Since 2014, the number of Central African children expected to develop SAM has risen by a third, according

to projections calculated for the 2019 CAR Humanitarian Response Plan. In 2018, SAM rates among young children have already risen above the emergency threshold of 2 per cent in more than half the country.

But the national-level data – alarming as it is – doesn’t reflect the even higher concentration of acute malnutrition seen among children displaced since the upsurge of violence and insecurity in late 2016. Most of CAR’s families are reliant on subsistence agriculture, and the fighting has uprooted tens of thousands of households – driving them into the bush, where they cannot farm, or to displacement camps, where they are reliant on humanitarian aid.

According to rapid surveys conducted in Ouaka, Haut-Mbomou and Basse-Kotte prefectures in 2017 and 2018, SAM rates were above the emergency threshold in 16 out of 18 displacement sites. For children living in the bush or in areas cut off by insecurity, *“the reality*

is very likely even more dire,” says Yves Nzigndo, the UNICEF Nutrition Cluster Coordinator in CAR.*

The acute malnutrition crisis represents the sharp edge of a longstanding systemic problem in CAR. Chronic nutritional deficiencies now leave at least two in five Central African children stunted – physically shorter than their peers, more likely to fall sick or die, and less likely to learn at school and earn as adults.

“Unless the security context improves and people are able to return to their homes and communities, those rates will only stagnate or deteriorate,” Nzigndo says.

In 2019, UNICEF will provide virtually all of the therapeutic food, medicine and equipment required to treat as many as possible of the more than 43,000 children expected to suffer from SAM during the year, along with specialized training for health workers.

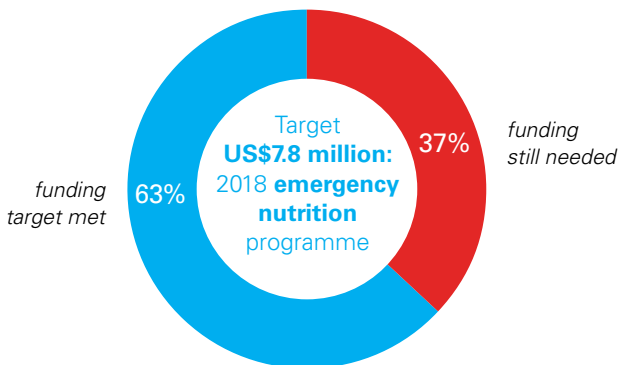
UNICEF will also spearhead efforts with partners to reach more than 1 million women and children with measures to tackle both acute and chronic malnutrition. These interventions will include more work to improve infant and young child feeding practices, as well as more micronutrient support, deworming and blanket supplementary feeding. In addition, UNICEF and partners plan to raise greater awareness about preventing and treating malnutrition at the household and community levels.

As of October, UNICEF had reached just 63 per cent of the US\$7.8 million funding target for its 2018 emergency nutrition programme in CAR.



“The whole country is in crisis, whether from insecurity or from poverty.”

Yves Nzigndo, UNICEF Nutrition Cluster Coordinator, CAR



* In a humanitarian context, a ‘cluster’ is a group of agencies taking coordinated action towards common goals in a particular sector of emergency response. UNICEF leads the Nutrition Cluster in CAR.



3. Education in emergencies: Learning under fire



The fighting across more and more of CAR's territory, and the displacement associated with it, threaten to crush an education system already on its knees.

In February 2018, six education workers – including a UNICEF consultant – were gunned down near Markounda, a remote area close to the Chadian border. They were there to train community teachers and make learning possible for some of the 280,000 Central African children between the ages of 3 and 18 who had been displaced from their homes. Sixty per cent of these children have dropped out of school.

Community teachers are individuals without any pedagogical background, most of whom haven't finished high school themselves but who receive special training. The training covers ways of working with large numbers of children, providing psychosocial support and preparing for security incidents in and around school premises. Community teachers make up 60 per cent of CAR's educators. In areas worst hit by the fighting, they are the only teachers.

The deadly incident near Markounda was one of 89 attacks against education facilities and personnel that have been reported since January 2017. This figure marks a sharp escalation in such attacks perpetrated by armed groups – ranging from looting and burning to occupying or fighting in close proximity to schools.

As a result of continued killings, abductions, assaults and threats, qualified teachers have fled their posts outside Bangui and major townships. Newly trained teachers decline deployment until they know they can do their work safely and be paid regularly, which is nearly impossible as there are very few banks outside Bangui. Numerous schools have shut down because of the violence or because they have no teachers. And in many cases, fear is keeping children away.

"A school might be open, but children won't go if it might be attacked or if a teacher has been abducted," says Amani Bwami Passy, the UNICEF Education Cluster Coordinator in CAR. Children who are not in school are at tremendous risk of exploitation, recruit-

ment into armed groups or involvement in criminal activity. Girls are at acute risk of sexual abuse, early marriage and early pregnancy.

At the national level in CAR, seven out of 10 children and adolescents drop out of school. Fewer than three in five finish primary school, and just 6 per cent complete the equivalent of high school. Strikingly, in conflict-affected areas where UNICEF has programmes, the proportion of children who go to school and take their exams is *higher* than in non-emergency settings. That's because education-in-emergencies initiatives bring many children into a learning environment for the first time – especially girls, who, for cultural or socio-economic reasons, would not be able to attend school under ordinary circumstances.

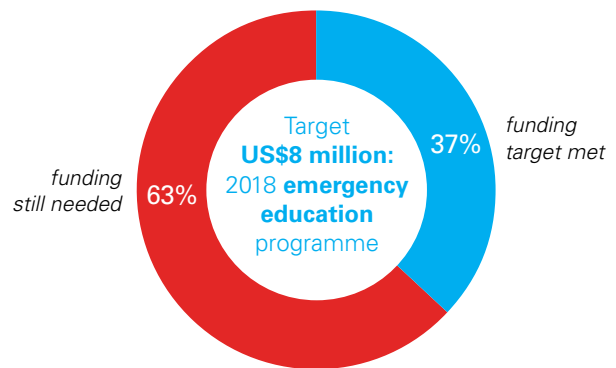
In emergency settings, as opposed to many 'normal' schools in CAR, volunteer teachers from the community are paid regularly, receive training and are more consistently in the classroom. And schools become more than spaces for learning. They offer a critically needed protective environment and an opportunity for children to be children.

UNICEF has helped set up hundreds of temporary learning spaces and trained thousands of community

teachers in CAR. It has also established catch-up programmes for children who have missed out on classes since 2014, when more than 65 per cent of schools across the country were closed or non-functional due to the fighting.

In 2019, UNICEF will continue to make learning opportunities available to affected children and provide training to community teachers. UNICEF will also focus on making sure that children who live in areas where they are part of an ethnic or religious minority group can still go to school.

As of October, UNICEF had reached just 37 per cent of the US\$8 million funding target for its 2018 emergency education response in CAR.



PEACE THROUGH EDUCATION: 'SOCIAL COHESION BEGINS IN SCHOOLS'

When fighting broke out in Bambari in April 2014, Gbiassango Kommando Alain, director of L'Ecole Application Mixte, ran through the school's classrooms, unscrewed the wooden windows and doors, and stashed them in his home to keep them from being stolen. Everything else was looted, and dead bodies were dumped into the school well.

Over the 2018 summer break, around 80 students, many of them displaced, took part in a UNICEF-supported 'catch-up' session at L'Ecole Application Mixte to make up for missed school days. The windows and doors had been screwed back in place in 2017, and work was under way to dig a new well.

"We need security. Once we have security, you will see all the schools reopen and all the children return," says Alain. "Everything that has happened in this country is because people have had no education – so they have become bandits and rebels."

The educator adds: *"Schools teach citizenship and rights. Social cohesion begins in schools, and where there is social cohesion, there is peace."*



© UNICEF/UN0239529/GILBERTSON VII PHOTO

4. Protecting children and young people from lasting harm

During the first nine months of 2018, almost 500 children in CAR were released from armed groups – but thousands more remain trapped.



© UNICEF/UN0239498/GILBERTSON VII PHOTO

Untold numbers of Central African children are forced into choices they should never have to make.

Boys and girls who have been driven into armed groups by violence or dehumanizing poverty endure unspeakable horrors. Recovery, for those able to break away, can take years. Because despair led them to the armed groups in the first place, recovery is sustainable only if the process equips them with the skills, knowledge and confidence to build a decent life.

Since 2014, some 13,000 children in CAR, including about 3,200 girls, have been released from armed groups with UNICEF support. Due primarily to a lack of multi-year funding – as well as limited technical capacity and access to children in insecure areas – 30 per cent of these children have yet to receive crucial assistance with reintegration.

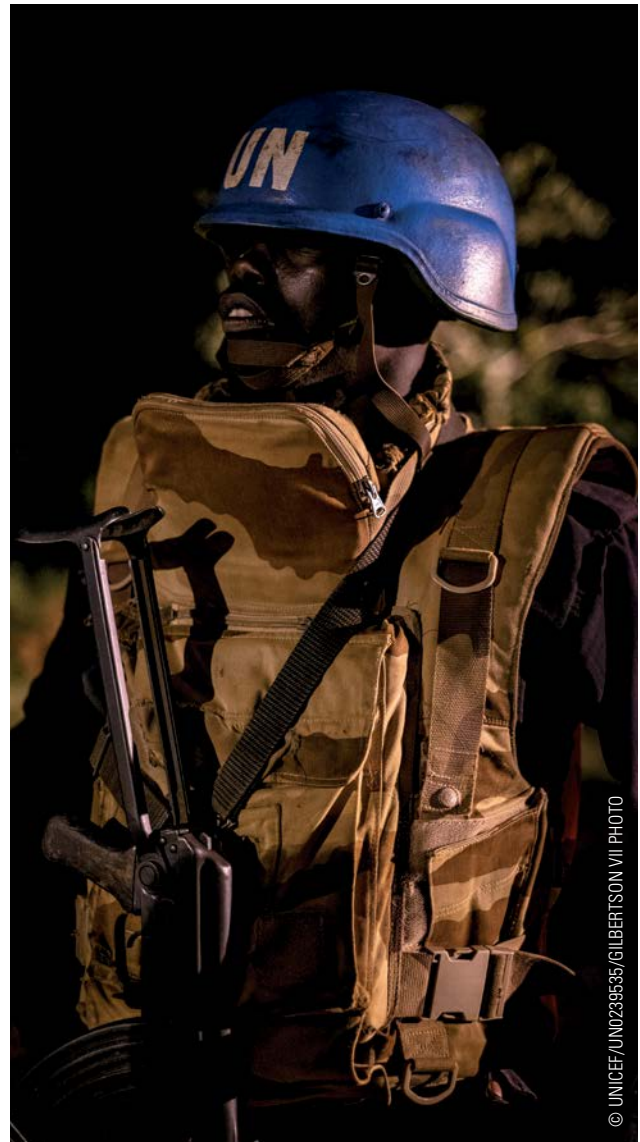
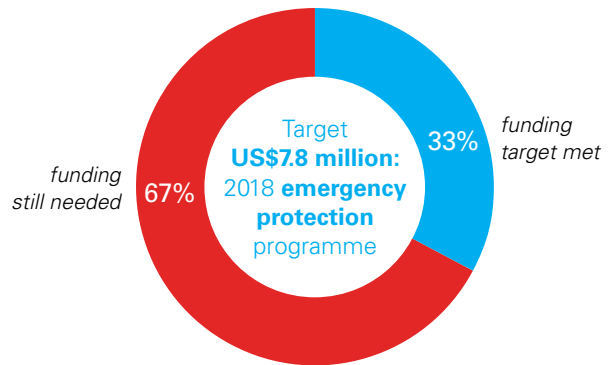
Ideally, reintegration support is a years-long process that helps children and young people return to their families, and to civilian life. It should include provision of housing and health care, education and vocational programmes, psychosocial counselling, family tracing and more. Because of funding shortages and the need to reach more children released from armed groups, however, most children in CAR with access to this support receive it for only three to six months.

‘Demobilized’ children who do not get reintegration support are sometimes rejected by their families. Girls are stigmatized because they are seen as sexually compromised. They are at high risk of being driven back into armed groups. Once re-recruited, they are far less likely to come back into a reintegration programme.

Thousands of girls are subject to sexual violence, not only by armed groups and forces but also by people they know and trust. The true numbers are unclear because of under-reporting. Survivors are often unwilling to come forward – largely because of the stigma they will face, as well as the scarcity of services available to them and the slim chance of perpetrators being brought to justice.

In other cases, girls and women are compelled to sell their bodies as the only way for them and their families to survive. They, too, require sustained support well beyond the immediate trauma they have experienced.

As of October, UNICEF had reached just 33 per cent of the US\$8.9 million funding target for its 2018 emergency protection programme in CAR.



© UNICEF/UN0239535/GILBERTSON VII PHOTO

TANGUY MANDAKATCHA, 'PROTECTOR OF CHILDREN'

In the past two years, Tanguy Mandakatcha, 34, has been a foster mother to 11 children separated from their parents because of the fighting in CAR. The children live with Mandakatcha, her husband and their three children at the family's home in a Christian neighbourhood in Bambari. They will remain until Esperance – the UNICEF-supported NGO in which Mandakatcha works as a gender-based violence specialist – can trace their families and make sure it is safe for them to return.

Seydou Ousmane, age 8, is the most recent arrival among the 11 foster children – and the first who is Muslim. *"I am a protector of children,"* says Mandakatcha. *"I have the right to welcome any child, without discrimination."*

Seydou's mother is dead, and his father was killed in the fighting. Seydou says he walked some of the 50 kilometres from his hometown of Maloum, then was picked up by a truck driver

who dropped him off at the marketplace in Bambari. He slept there with other children living on the street until an aid worker found him and brought him to Esperance.

The first night at Mandakatcha's house, Seydou would not respond to anything she said but insisted on sleeping in her bed. The next night, she coaxed him to sleep with the other children, telling him, *"I am also your mother. You can be safe with me, and you can play with my other children."* He now loves playing board games and soccer, and dreams of getting a Real Madrid jersey and sneakers.

According to Mandakatcha, none of her neighbours has expressed any problems with her hosting a Muslim child. *"We are in a moment of crisis,"* she asserts. *"There are so many children who need help. He's just a child."*



© UNICEF/UN02395632/GILBERTSON VII PHOTO

5. The urgent need for security and peace



© UNICEF/UN0239552/GILBERTSON VII PHOTO



Across CAR, families are afraid to sleep in their beds, send their children to school or go to the market. Forcibly displaced families set up makeshift shelters as close as possible to peacekeeping positions, mosques, churches or hospitals. Aid work beyond a few kilometres outside major urban areas requires an armed escort.

Delivering a stronger humanitarian response, and creating the conditions for truly sustainable development, are not possible unless communities feel safe and the people who provide life-saving aid and services can reach every child in need.

In CAR, these conditions will require far more robust security. But the crisis is deepening. Needs are growing, and so is the suffering, as people's coping mechanisms become increasingly depleted. Meanwhile, funding for the overall humanitarian response has dropped sharply since 2014, as donors shift resources towards a recovery phase that has yet to yield tangible results.

To create the conditions for peace and longer-term prosperity, CAR urgently needs a fully funded humanitarian response along with equally urgent development support. Because humanitarian work and (in some cases) recovery efforts are happening side by side, funding should be as flexible as possible so that it can be used in the most effective way.

If CAR is to extricate itself from chronic crises – with full support from the international community – then the country must make sure this generation of children is able to turn the page on violence and poverty. It can do so only by protecting, educating and nurturing children, no matter their circumstances, for years to come. To that end, CAR will need far more resources now and in the long term.

Anything less means condemning CAR's children and young people to a slow, painful descent into lost hopes, lost futures and lost lives.

CHILDREN UNDER ATTACK IN CAR: TWO STORIES OF LOSS AND HOPE*

* Names changed to protect identities.



© UNICEF/UN0239558/GILBERTSON VII PHOTO

LAURENT'S STORY 'Get all the kids out of armed groups'

Laurent, 20, spent a year and a half as a child soldier in CAR. He was released in August 2015 and then spent a year in a UNICEF-supported reintegration programme. By September 2018, he was a trained mechanic and had learned how to grow vegetables and raise animals, as well as basic literacy.

In early December 2013, Laurent recalls, he joined the anti-Balaka militia in Bangui. It was the day when Muslim and Christian communities, egged on by armed groups, engaged in a killing rampage. "They [the Seleka] came into my neighbourhood. We were being attacked, and we were fighting back," he says. The anti-Balaka wanted to push the Seleka fighters back to a Muslim part of Bangui known as PK 5.

"You don't need to learn anything in order to become an anti-Balaka," Laurent notes, adding that being anti-Balaka just meant taking orders. "You are given a weapon and you use it... If told to kill or attack, you do it."

Laurent says he fed information about Seleka movements to the group and helped dispose of dead bodies. He won't add more about what he did when he was with the anti-Balaka. "God sent UNICEF to take me out of the group," he says. "That part of my life is over. There is no way I am going back."

When Laurent first learned about the reintegration programme, he was sceptical: "We thought UNICEF was lying to us in order to weaken the group so that the Seleka could attack us again. But our chief told us, 'Go see for yourselves and if you don't like it, you can come back.'"

Laurent was soon convinced. "There was this big ceremony organized for our release [from the armed group], and we were given t-shirts and soccer jerseys, and we realized we were going to be given vocational training," he says. "We realized it was for real."

The former child soldiers lived in a boarding house, and a bus took them to school. They were fed breakfast, lunch and dinner every day. "When I went back to my neighbourhood," says Laurent, I told the older people that I had the opportunity to study. They all said, "This is your chance and you should take it."

His best friend from the anti-Balaka dropped out of the reintegration programme. "He thought it was useless to study. All he wanted to do was loot," Laurent explains, lamenting that his friend was killed while trying to steal a motorbike. Five or six other former child soldiers he knows have gone back to the anti-Balaka. "With the anti-Balaka, you have more money," he says.

"For me, it's fine now," adds Laurent. "I can make my own living. But if UNICEF really wants to help, then get all the kids out of armed groups. Go through the country and find all the children who have nothing, who sleep out in the open. Put them in school. If they don't study, fine. But if they do, you need to help them. Many girls are forced to sell their bodies just to survive, and it shouldn't be that way. What we need is jobs. As long as I can make enough money every day to feed myself, I will never go back."



© UNICEF/UN0239446/GILBERTSON VII PHOTO

ESTHER'S STORY

'I don't want to suffer anymore'

The day Esther, age 17, was chained and raped by a militant began like any other.

An ordinary day meant helping to clean the house, fetching water and buying vegetables at the market in Kaga-Bandoro town, near the home where she lived with her parents, an older brother and a younger sister. She liked to play hide-and-seek and dance with her sister.

When the first shots rang out, her parents shouted to Esther. Then there was utter chaos as an armed group attacked unarmed villagers. She fell to the floor, then ran and ran. She was alone when darkness fell. She entered an abandoned home to hide, but a militant found her there. He bound her with a chain and told her he would shoot if she shouted. She regained consciousness the next morning, her lower body bloodied.

A passer-by eventually found Esther and unchained her. She made her way to a displacement site, where she learned that her parents had been killed. Alone, she got on a truck bringing other displaced people to the capital, Bangui, where she had relatives.

Esther soon realized she was pregnant when she didn't get her period. By then, she was living with an aunt at a family compound near the Bangui airport. She gave birth without any relatives present, her frame so small that she needed a Caesarean section. No one from her family came to visit her at the hospital, she says, *"because of what happened to me in Kaga-Bandoro."*

Esther has no friends in Bangui, but she doesn't want to return to Kaga-Bandoro because she's afraid she will be killed. Her sister and brother live separately, each placed with other relatives. Her aunt forces her to work at the family compound, cleaning up and preparing food for nearly a dozen other family members. She doesn't go to school with the other children.

"I don't want to suffer anymore," says Esther. "I want vocational training so I can learn how to sew."

Bethanie, a UNICEF-supported NGO, helped Esther through the pregnancy and is now helping her raise her daughter by providing food, clothing and psychosocial support. Today, the baby is all that matters to her. *"The baby brings me peace,"* she says.

6. Funding the emergency response

UNICEF's US\$56.5 million emergency response plan for CAR in 2018 aims to reach 1 million people, including 700,000 children, with humanitarian assistance. The key priorities are to immunize children, treat severe acute malnutrition, make sure school-aged children can keep learning and protect them from grave violations. Water, sanitation and hygiene support are integrated into each priority area.

Between January and September 2018, a Rapid Response Mechanism led by UNICEF – and intended to provide crucial non-food items and water, sanitation







and hygiene supplies to communities affected by sudden shocks – had already reached almost 180,000 people. That total exceeded the projected 160,000 to be reached over the entire year and was 65,000 more than the number of people reached during the same period in 2017.

The following data reflect UNICEF results achieved to date in CAR. They also highlight the need for significantly more resources to meet the needs of children and young people caught in the crisis.



© UNICEF/UN0239471/GILBERTSON VII PHOTO

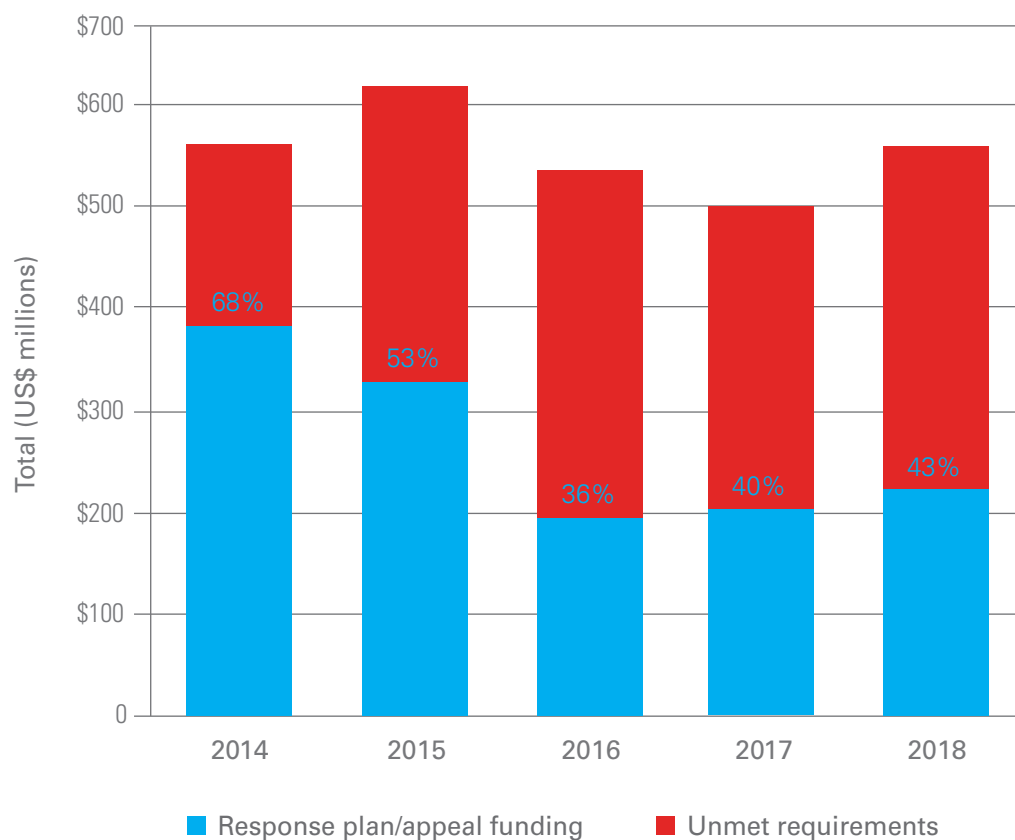
UNICEF results for children in CAR, 2018 (as of 31 August)

PROGRAMMES	2018 Target	UNICEF Results
NUTRITION		
 Children aged 6–59 months with Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) admitted for therapeutic care	27,961	19,298
Recovery rate (%)	>75%	89.65%
HEALTH		
 Children under 5 vaccinated against polio	910,000	485,812
People and children under 5 in displacement sites and enclaves with access to essential health services and medicines	500,000	10,223
WATER, SANITATION & HYGIENE		
 Crisis-affected people with access to safe water for drinking, cooking and personal hygiene	600,000	76,345
Crisis-affected people accessing appropriate sanitation facilities	300,000	54,556
Crisis-affected girls/women accessing menstrual hygiene management services	45,000	5,180
CHILD PROTECTION		
 Children reached with psychosocial support through child-friendly spaces	100,000	67,043
Children released from armed forces/groups reached with reintegration support	3,500	498
Registered unaccompanied separated children supported with reunification services	800	511
Women and children reached with gender-based violence prevention and response interventions	1,000	221
EDUCATION		
 Number of children (boys and girls 3–17 years old) in areas affected by crisis accessing education	85,000	66,478
Children receiving learning materials	100,000	62,942
Children (boys and girls 3–17 years old) attending school in a class led by a teacher trained in psychosocial support	100,500	74,028
RAPID RESPONSE MECHANISM		
 Acutely vulnerable people rapidly provided with non-food items after a shock	160,000	138,708
Affected people receiving appropriate WASH interventions after a shock	70,000	85,790

CAR humanitarian appeals, 2014–2018: A chronic and underfunded crisis

YEAR	UNICEF appeal (US\$ millions)	Funds received against appeal (US\$ millions)	Funding gap
2014	\$81	\$38.3	53%
2015	\$70.9	\$41.4	42%
2016	\$55.7	\$31.5	44%
2017	\$53.6	\$24.8	52%
2018 (as of 31 October)	\$56.5	\$29.7	56%

Trends in response plan/appeal requirements, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

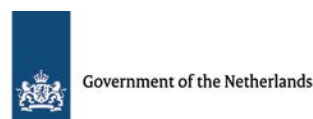


UNICEF humanitarian funding in CAR, 2018 (US\$, as of 31 October)

Sector	Requirements	Funds available			Funding gap	
		Funds received current year	Carry-over	Total received	\$	%
Nutrition	7,800,000	4,750,375	156,576	4,906,951	2,893,049	37%
Health and HIV/AIDS	9,000,000	0	59,240	59,240	8,940,760	99%
Water, sanitation & hygiene	9,600,000	1,271,736	488,711	1,760,447	7,839,553	82%
Child protection	8,900,000	2,535,541	377,766	2,913,307	5,986,693	67%
Education	8,000,000	2,710,743	256,051	2,966,793	5,033,207	63%
Rapid Response Mechanism	11,700,000	13,549,508	3,574,739	17,124,246	0	0%
Cluster/sector coordination	1,500,000	300,000	0	300,000	1,200,000	80%
Total	56,500,000	25,117,902	4,913,082	30,030,985	31,893,262	56%

Thank you!

UNICEF thanks its partners and donors without whom its work on behalf of children in the Central African Republic would not be possible.





© UNICEF/UN029395/6/GILBERTSON VII PHOTO



For further information, please contact:

Marixie Mercado
UNICEF Geneva
mmercado@unicef.org

Donaig Le Du
UNICEF CAR
dledu@unicef.org

Thierry Delvigne-Jean
UNICEF West and Central Africa
tdelvignejean@unicef.org

© United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

November 2018

Child Alert is a briefing series that presents the core challenges for children in crisis. This edition focusses on the situation of children and their families in the Central African Republic. This Child Alert is a reminder that the lives of 1.5 million children in CAR hang by the most fragile of threads.

Children in the Central African Republic are among an estimated 250 million living in countries and areas affected by armed conflict. Last year, UNICEF launched the global campaign #ChildrenUnderAttack to highlight the plight of these highly vulnerable children.