

Niangoma – Situation Overview – July 2014

Over the past decade, the Republic of Niangoma¹ has experienced intense, reoccurring fighting. Since 2 May 2014, conflict has erupted again between two groups (pro-government Espadrilles and the anti-government Flip-Flops) in four Prefectures² in the east of the country (Basse-Kotto, Haute-Kotto, Haut-Mbomou and Mboumou). The recurrent fighting and instability - that is still taking place today - has weakened the country and immersed it in an acute crisis, with very negative impacts on the lives and living conditions of the civilian population. Protection, livelihoods, food, health and education are amongst the sectors most affected by the recent political upheavals affecting a total of 1,640,000 persons and causing a displacement of 145,000³ people (53.4%⁴ of them being children) in 100 IDP sites. Rural populations have fled their villages to the bush, and many civil servants have left their posts.

Figures available on the number of IPDs, IDP sites and events of armed conflict⁵ by Sous-Prefectures have been made available by OCHA in the file Humanitarian_Data.xls.

Due to continued fighting and insecurity, the entire Prefecture of Mbomou is currently not accessible by humanitarian actors, with the exception of the Sous-Prefecture of Gambo. Additionally, the Sous-Prefecture of Bria in Haute-Kotto Prefecture is also not accessible.

A preliminary mission from OCHA in accessible, affected areas shows high concerns of child trafficking and children being separated and/or unaccompanied in regions where IDPs are present. Most, if not all, of the schools appear to be closed and assessment teams travelling on the principal axes report that many of the schools along the road appear to be badly damaged by the conflict and/or are being occupied by soldiers or displaced populations. Anecdotal reports from the field also confirm that schools in the affected areas have closed, most of the education personnel have fled, parents are refusing to allow their children to attend classes from fear of violence, and many schools have been damaged and looted. The end-of-year exams which were scheduled to take place at the end of May will most likely be postponed which could have a severely negative impact on student enrollment, especially for those transitioning between primary and secondary school.

The Protection Cluster reports major risks of people – including children – showing signs of psychosocial distress and mental disorders among the IDPs coming from regions affected by the conflict. From previous conflicts in the country, it is known that there is usually an increase in child labour and sexual violence during these type of conflicts. The Education Cluster is not currently aware of any learning activities that are taking place in the IDP sites.

Furthermore, preliminary inter-agency assessments have reported children at checkpoints. There was an estimation of 1,500 children associated with armed and forces groups before the conflict.

¹ Fictional country; don't bother trying to Google map it...

² Niangoma is divided into the following administrative levels (largest to smallest): Prefecture, Sous-Prefecture, Commune and Village

³ Data from OCHA, July 12th, 2014

⁴ Data from 2008 National Census

⁵ Data from <https://www.strausscenter.org/acled.html>

Niangoma - Map of Armed Conflict Events and IDP presence by Sous-Prefecture – July 2014

