

EASTERN DRC SITUATION

16 May 2025



Recently arrived Congolese refugees, fleeing violence in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, at the overcrowded Nyakabande transit centre in southwest Uganda. © UNHCR/Yonna Tukundane

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Although a ceasefire was declared in late April, fighting has continued in several parts of North and South Kivu.** The presence and activities of armed groups continue to pose numerous protection risks to the civilian population.
- According to the [International Committee of the Red Cross \(ICRC\)](#), **1,359 disarmed members of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (FARDC) and their families have been successfully relocated from Goma to Kinshasa.**
- **The protection environment in Goma and surrounding areas has significantly deteriorated following the launch of ‘cordon-and-search’ operations by non-state authorities in control of the area,** reportedly aimed at identifying and apprehending armed individuals.
- As of the end of April, UNHCR, in collaboration with the *Commission Mouvement des Populations (CMP)*, **verified the presence of 23,303 IDP households across 13 spontaneous IDP sites and 52 collective centres** in North Kivu Province.
- According to [OCHA](#), **there has been some improvement in humanitarian access in certain areas of Ituri Province,** including Djugu Territory.
- Over 141,000 people have fled violence in eastern DRC to neighboring countries since the start of the year. UNHCR and partners are supporting not just emergency assistance, but also access to services, self-reliance, and inclusion from the outset—laying the groundwork for more sustainable solutions for both refugees and host communities.

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

- **Although a ceasefire was declared in late April, fighting has continued in several parts of North and South Kivu.** Over the past week, clashes between government forces and armed groups were reported in the Masisi, Rutshuru, and Lubero territories in North Kivu, as well as in the Kalehe and Kabare territories in South Kivu. The presence and activities of armed groups continue to pose numerous protection risks to the civilian population.
- According to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), **1,359 disarmed members of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (FARDC) and their families have been successfully relocated from Goma to Kinshasa**, travelling almost 2,000 kilometres by land and across front lines. Since 30 April, the ICRC has been accompanying disarmed soldiers to Kinshasa through multiple specially negotiated convoys.
- UNHCR, in collaboration with the *Commission Mouvement des Populations (CMP)*, **verified the presence of 23,303 IDP households- comprising 112,736 individuals - across 13 spontaneous IDP sites and 52 collective centres in the territories of Masisi, Rutshuru, Lubero and Beni** in North Kivu Province as of the end of April.
- **The protection environment in Goma and surrounding areas has significantly deteriorated following the launch of ‘cordon-and-search’ operations by non-state authorities in control of the area**, reportedly aimed at identifying and apprehending armed individuals. As part of these operations, men have been separated from women and children and relocated either to Unity Stadium in Goma or to undisclosed locations. The operation has coincided with a rise in reported cases of arrest and detention, enforced disappearances, extortion, and physical violence against civilians.
- **UNHCR is working with partners, including WFP, to expand hosting capacity at the overcrowded transit centre.** As part of these efforts, a shelter review was conducted on 14 May to identify immediate actions necessary to improve conditions. Several rehabilitation and construction interventions have been proposed, **which would increase the centre’s capacity from 900 to 1,500 individuals.**
- In April, **UNHCR recorded 106 cases of violence against women and girls across North and South Kivu, with the highest number reported in Beni Territory.** Psychosocial support was provided to all survivors. Since the beginning of the year, 373 survivors have received psychosocial assistance, including 117 rape survivors who were referred to health facilities within 72 hours. In the same month, UNHCR and its partners reached 2,721 people through awareness-raising sessions on violence against women and girls and available support services. **Since January, more than 13,000 people have been reached with information to help prevent violence and ensure survivors know where to seek help.**
- **UNHCR and partners continue to support returnee households as they rebuild their lives. Between 12 and 15 May, 292 returnee households—around 1,460 people—received core relief items** through UNHCR’s partner *Appui aux Initiatives de Développement et à la Protection de l’Environnement et de la Santé (AIDES)*. To help ensure returns are safe and sustainable, UNHCR and UNDP launched a joint assessment on 14 May to identify housing needs in areas of return. The assessment is expected to conclude within two weeks and will help guide future support.
- In South Kivu, UNHCR continues to conduct awareness-raising activities on voluntary repatriation and assess the return intentions of Burundian refugees. **A further 76 Burundian refugees at the Lusenda site have expressed their intention to return, bringing the total number of individuals who wish to return to Burundi to 985.**
- **Over 100 people** have reportedly died due to flooding in Kasaba village, located on the shores of Lake Tanganyika in Fizi Territory, South Kivu Province, **between 8 and 9 May.** According to local officials, the majority of the victims were the elderly or children. Local officials have also reported that Kasaba is cut off from surrounding areas due to flooding and is only

accessible via Lake Tanganyika. Some 2,000 households in Kasiba are reportedly without shelter.

- According to [OCHA](#), there has been some improvement in humanitarian access in some regions of Ituri Province, including Djugu Territory. However, the discontinuation of a number of nutritional programmes due to financial constraints has reportedly led to a deterioration of the nutritional situation in Aru and Mahagi Territories. As of the end of March, the NGO INTERSOS discontinued its nutritional programme, which provided support to 82,000 children as well as pregnant and lactating women in these territories.
- Efforts to support sustainable livelihoods are ongoing, including at the Mulongwe site in Fizi Territory, where market garden associations continue to receive agricultural inputs and access to land for cultivation. **These initiatives aim to strengthen food security and promote self-reliance among refugee and host communities.** UNHCR's partner AIDES also plays a key role in helping resolve disputes related to the distribution of harvested crops, ensuring the benefits of the programme are shared fairly and contribute to long-term community cohesion.

Regional Updates

- As of 15 May, over 141,000 people have fled the DRC to neighbouring countries since the beginning of the year, with the majority arriving in Burundi and Uganda. Uganda continues to receive the highest number of new arrivals during the reporting period.
- The latest figures on new arrivals to neighbouring countries are reflected in the Eastern DRC Displacement Dashboard, Burundi CORE and Uganda CORE, which are updated regularly and available on the [Operational Data Portal](#)

Country	Total New Arrivals* since 1 Jan (as of 15 May unless specified)	Arrivals in the Past 7 Days
Burundi	70,420 (as of 22 April)	-
Uganda	64,266 (as of 13 May)	884
Zambia	1,405 (as of 13 May)	52
Rwanda	2,014	11
Tanzania	2,906 (as of 13 May)	151
TOTAL	141,011	1,098

**For countries where data is available, the new arrivals figure includes returnees as well as refugees from third countries, alongside the Congolese new arrivals. The inclusion of these group reflects that returnee populations and third-country nationals may also have specific international protection and humanitarian needs.*

Burundi

- Since the start of the year, over 70,000 refugees are estimated to have arrived in Burundi from the DRC. To improve data accuracy and better inform the response, an enumeration and verification exercise is currently underway in Cibitoke Province, which borders the DRC. Launched on 24 April, the exercise has temporarily affected the pace of reporting on new arrivals but will ultimately help ensure more coordinated and effective assistance.

Uganda

- Since the beginning of 2025, Uganda has received over 64,000 new arrivals from the DRC, of whom almost 56,000 have been registered so far. A total of 807 new arrivals were recorded over the seven days from 5-11 May, which represents a 68 per cent reduction from the

previous week and a significant decrease from the peak of over 6,000 weekly new arrivals recorded in mid-April. Of the 64,000 new arrivals from the DRC received this year, some 33 per cent are children under the age of 12. Notably, 64 per cent of new arrivals this year have entered Uganda via crossing points in Kisoro District (Bunagana, Nteko, and Busanza) in the southwestern corner of the country.

- The **ongoing reduction in the number of new arrivals is attributed to movement restrictions imposed** by the non-state authorities controlling the area on the DRC side of the border.
- As of 11 May, **over 8,400 asylum seekers were staying at transit and reception centres in Uganda, awaiting relocation to longer-term settlements**. More than half are currently at Kabanza reception centre, which is severely overcrowded. A recent drop in new arrivals from the DRC has helped ease pressure at some sites, particularly Nyakabande, now operating within its capacity. In the past week, nearly 3,000 people were transferred from Nyakabande to Kabanza to reduce congestion, but Kabanza continues to host three times more people than it was built to accommodate.
- **The scale of arrivals over the first 4 months of the year, combined with funding cuts, continues to present challenges in ensuring sufficient services and assistance to new arrivals:**
 - **WASH:** Water coverage at all transit and reception centres remains below the emergency standards of 15 liters per person per day, with supply over recent days compounded by technical issues impacting the national water supply. Despite progress in increasing capacity, latrine coverage at the Nyakabande and Matanda transit centres stands at 1:139 and 1:138, respectively, significantly above the 1:50 emergency standard.
 - **Logistics:** Limited availability of commercial buses continues to delay the timely relocation of new arrivals from transit centres, resulting in longer stays.
 - **Protection:** Protection capacity remains limited, particularly in meeting the needs of the large number of unaccompanied and separated children arriving.

Tanzania

- As of 8 May, **more than 2,900 asylum seekers from the DRC have arrived in Tanzania** since the start of the year, including 151 in the past seven days. New arrivals continue to cross via Lake Tanganyika and land borders, including routes through Burundi.

Zambia

- **Zambia continues to receive a steady flow of asylum seekers, with 52 new arrivals recorded in the past week and over 1,400 since the start of the year.** While numbers are lower than in neighboring countries, the continued movement reflects persistent protection needs. As a country with a long history of hosting refugees, Zambia remains an important part of the regional response. UNHCR and partners continue to provide support while maintaining contingency plans for up to 15,000 arrivals should the situation evolve.

Rwanda

- Since January 2025, the number of Rwandan refugees who have been voluntarily repatriated from the Democratic Republic of the Congo has continued to rise. **With over 1,500 people supported to return so far this year, the figure is now approaching UNHCR's planning target for the entire year.**

- The surge in returns has placed added strain on the Nyarushishi transit centre, where returnees receive temporary shelter, basic assistance, and health services while undergoing screening and documentation. **The centre is now overcrowded, with inadequate water, sanitation, and accommodation facilities, as well as growing gaps in healthcare access.** Limited processing capacity has led to delays, with many returnees staying an average of three weeks before moving on to their home communities, further compounding the congestion.
- To support their reintegration, **refugee returnees receive a cash grant to help meet their immediate needs, such as food, transport, or basic household items, upon returning home.** Twenty percent of the grant is provided at the transit centre, while the remaining 80 percent is disbursed once they reach their home communities. UNHCR also facilitates transport to help them return to their areas of origin.

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