

EASTERN DRC SITUATION

08 August 2025



Congolese refugees being transported from Rugombo, Cibitoke Province, to the safer Musenyi site in southern Burundi, March 2025, after fleeing violence in the DRC. ©UNHCR/Charity Nzomo

HIGHLIGHTS

- **The Governments of the DRC and Rwanda, together with UNHCR, held a [Tripartite Commission Meeting](#)** in Addis Ababa on 22–24 July to discuss the voluntary repatriation of refugees between the two countries.
- **The UN [High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Turk](#), condemned the recent escalation of deadly attacks by armed groups in eastern DRC**, which reportedly killed 319 civilians in July, resulting in ‘one of the most significant recent documented monthly death tolls in such attacks.
- UNHCR and partners continue to provide protection services across North and South Kivu, including case management and referrals for vulnerable individuals.
- **The voluntary repatriation of Burundian refugees from South Kivu continued on 31 July, with 227 individuals returning to Burundi.** This brings the total repatriated in 2025 to 609.
- **Funding shortages are severely affecting humanitarian and protection assistance for conflict-affected civilians in eastern DRC and refugees in neighboring countries.** UNHCR has scaled back its PSEA network in eastern DRC, while food assistance cuts in Uganda have left nine of thirteen settlements food insecure. In Zambia, limited resources have reduced support for new arrivals and led to strict prioritization of aid.
- **Almost 120,000 people have fled eastern DRC to neighboring countries since the start of the year.** Although the number of new arrivals has dropped significantly compared to earlier peaks, the arrival rates remain substantially higher than the same period in 2024.

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

- **On 31 July, the inaugural meeting of the Joint Oversight Committee, established as part of the 27 June Washington Accords between the DRC and Rwanda, was convened in Washington.** This committee brought together representatives from DRC and Rwanda- as well as observers from Qatar, Togo (as the AU mediator), the USA, and the African Union (AU) - to monitor compliance with the agreement's provisions and to resolve any disputes arising.
- **On 19 July, the Government of the DRC and the Congo River Alliance (AFC)/ March 23 Movement signed a Declaration of Principles following months of negotiations in Doha, facilitated by the State of Qatar.** The declaration commits the DRC Government and M23 to reach a full peace agreement by 18 August. [UN Secretary General Guterres](#) welcomed the declaration as a 'significant step towards de-escalation, peace and stability in the eastern DRC and the Great Lakes Region.
- **The UN [High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Turk](#), condemned the recent escalation of deadly attacks by armed groups in eastern DRC, which reportedly killed 319 civilians in July, resulting in 'one of the largest recent documented monthly death tolls in such attacks.** He urged the signatories and facilitators of both the Washington and Doha agreements to 'ensure that they rapidly translate the agreements into safety, security and real progress for civilians in the DRC, who continue to endure the devastating consequences of these conflicts.'
- **The Governments of the DRC and Rwanda, together with UNHCR, held a [Tripartite Commission Meeting](#) in Addis Ababa on 22–24 July to discuss the voluntary repatriation of refugees between the two countries.** The meeting culminated in the endorsement of a joint [communiqué](#), which emphasized the vital link between sustainable return and broader peacebuilding efforts in the Great Lakes region.
- **Heavy presence of armed actors reportedly continues to contribute to a precarious protection environment across eastern DRC, with civilians not only directly caught up in hostilities but also susceptible to forced displacement, human rights violations, and exploitation.** In North Kivu, recent non-state armed group security operations reported across Masisi and Rutshuru territories have led to the localized displacement of high numbers of civilians. Attacks in Ituri Province have also had wider regional impacts, disrupting economic activity and limiting civilian movements, thereby increasing vulnerability. In South Kivu, as elsewhere, the heightened presence of armed groups and high levels of militarization remain closely linked to protection risks for civilians. Between 28 July and 3 August, UNHCR recorded 587 protection incidents in South Kivu, 333 of them in Kalehe Territory.
- **As of 6 August, 630 Rwandan refugees remain at the Goma Transit Centre awaiting voluntary repatriation to Rwanda.** A further 31 Rwandan refugees are currently being hosted at assembly points in Kitchanga, Karuba, and Mwesa, awaiting transfer to the Goma Transit Centre. Over the first week of August, UNHCR conducted a data quality check for the 630 Rwandan refugees at the transit centre and finalized voluntary repatriation forms, with the premanifest also prepared. A meeting is planned for the last week of August to agree on the process for repatriating all those currently at the transit centre, in line with the recommendations from the July tripartite meeting in Addis Ababa.
- **On 31 July, the National Commission for Refugees (CNR), UNHCR, and partner NGOs in Baraka and Uvira in South Kivu organized a fourth voluntary repatriation convoy for Burundian refugees.** This convoy supported the return of 227 individuals to Burundi, bringing the total number of Burundian refugees repatriated so far in 2025 to 609, equivalent to 15 per cent of the 2025 target of 4,000 individuals. In South Kivu, a further 5,050 individuals- comprising 1,680 Burundians and 3,370 Rwandans- have expressed their intention to return.
- **On 10 July 2025, UNDP and UNHCR organized a workshop in Goma to present the findings of a study on the sustainability of returns for internally displaced persons (IDPs)**

in North Kivu. The event brought together around 50 humanitarian, peace, and development individuals. The study, conducted by AIDPROFEN in May 2025, revealed that returnees in North Kivu continue to face significant protection risks, including human rights violations such as movement restrictions, rape, and physical assaults. In addition, returnees struggle with limited access to essential services, including food, healthcare, education, and clean water, factors that undermine the sustainability of their return.

- **UNHCR, in collaboration with its partners, continues to deliver a comprehensive package of protection interventions in North and South Kivu, including:**

- **Child Protection:** Through its implementing partner in South Kivu, AIDES, UNHCR supported almost 80 refugee children to access Alternative Education for Children in early August, aimed at bridging educational gaps and facilitating re-entry into formal schooling. UNHCR also continued to monitor child protection risks, including follow-up on seven at-risk refugee children in Bukavu city, with specific assistance provided to their households to reduce vulnerability.
- **Community-Based Protection:** Through its partner INTERSOS, UNHCR convened a meeting on 31 July to review progress on Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) in Lubero Territory, funded by the Central Emergency Relief Fund (CERF). The first nine QIPs will be handed over to the local community by 15 August, with a further nine by the end of the month. UNHCR also continued awareness-raising sessions across eastern DRC on issues including peaceful coexistence and PSEA. Between 14–20 July, six dedicated PSEA sessions were held in Masisi, Rutshuru, and Walikale, increasing awareness of complaint mechanisms and reinforcing that all humanitarian assistance from INTERSOS, UNHCR, and partners is free of charge. In Kitshanga, Masisi Territory, a roundtable with 30 IDPs, returnees, local authorities, and leaders resulted in commitments to peaceful coexistence and the creation of a monitoring committee.
- **GBV:** As part of ongoing prevention efforts, UNHCR's partner AIDPROFEN conducted community-led awareness sessions in July and early August, reaching over 1,200 returnees in North Kivu on GBV, sexual and reproductive health, and prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse PSEA. In South Kivu, three dedicated PSEA sessions reached 191 individuals. UNHCR and partners, including the Union of Women for Change and Development (UFCD) and the Panzi Foundation, continued to monitor GBV and provide follow-up support. Between mid-July and early August, partners documented 44 incidents of GBV, including 29 cases of rape, with all survivors receiving psychosocial support and, where needed, medical care or legal assistance. Due to financial constraints, UNHCR has reduced the scope of its Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) strategy across the country, scaling back the network through the discontinuation of three PSEA coordinator positions and merging all PSEA networks into a single national network.
- **Prevention of statelessness:** UNHCR continues to facilitate access to civil registration, and by extension legal identity, for newly born children at the Lusenda and Mulongwe refugee settlements in Baraka, Fizi Territory. In the first two weeks of July, 40 new births were registered through the civil registry office to issue birth certificates.

- **UNHCR continues to support sustainable responses in eastern DRC.** On 29 July, 58 urban refugees received their vocational training kits in Goma. These training kits were provided following the completion of vocational training programmes across various vocations, including IT, logistics, mechanics, driving, and plumbing.
- As part of its partnership with the Vodafone Foundation to provide digital learning opportunities for refugees and host communities through the Instant Network Schools (INS) programme, **digital equipment was officially handed over to two schools in South Kivu as of the end of July.** Ongoing support is being provided to help teachers integrate digital tools and fully establish digital classrooms, including improving internet connectivity.

- UNHCR and AIDPROFEN issued a [study](#) on the use of improved cooking stoves by IDPs in sites around Goma, aimed at reducing GBV risks linked to firewood collection in Virunga National Park. The study carried out in December 2024, recommended culturally and context-appropriate solutions, diversification of energy sources (e.g., briquettes, gas), integration into multisectoral programmes, active participation of women and girls, and community-based management of the stoves. UNHCR and AIDPROFEN are exploring ways on how to adopt these recommendations despite current funding constraints.

REGIONAL UPDATES

- **As of the beginning of August, some 120,000 people have fled the DRC to neighboring countries since the beginning of the year**, the majority of whom have arrived in Burundi and Uganda. The rate of new arrivals has remained relatively static over recent weeks. While the number of new arrivals is significantly below the peak levels recorded between February and April, the arrival rate remains significantly higher than the same period in 2024.
- The latest figures on new arrivals to neighboring 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 ¹ since 1 Jan
Burundi	40,469 (as of 29 July)
Uganda	69,771 (as of 3 August)
Zambia	1,963 (as of 31 July)
Rwanda	4,367 ² (as of 29 July)
Tanzania	3,124 (as of 29 July)
TOTAL	119,694

Burundi

- **Since 1 January, it is estimated that well over 70,000 people have arrived from DRC to Burundi, of whom at least 40,467 are estimated to remain in Burundi, including 36,989 refugees.** In the period 30 June- 20 July a further 317 new arrivals were recorded across key entry points.
- **UNHCR and partners continue to provide humanitarian and protection assistance to new arrivals, including the 17,359 people transferred to the Musenyi settlement**, as well as the 15,809 refugees identified among the host community in Cibitoke Province and 3,821 refugees currently residing at transit centres or border locations. Key responses include:
 - **Protection:** UNHCR and partners have provided tailored support to 43 individuals with specific needs over the reporting period. This includes the provision of mobility items to people with physical disabilities and/ or mobility challenges. Through the Rugombo Protection Helpdesk, 30 refugees from conflict-affected areas in DRC were transferred to the Cishemere Transit Centre with support from Save the Children and the National Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (ONPRA)
 - **Child Protection:** UNHCR and Save the Children have also provided recreational and psychosocial support to 197 refugee children, assisted 24 unaccompanied and separated children, and trained 85 community members on child protection and alternative care. Over

¹ 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.

² This figure comprises 3,765 Rwandan refugee returnees who have been supported to return from DRC to Rwanda, including 381 who were supported to voluntarily return on 10 June.

the reporting period, the STAM Foundation also began registering children aged between 0 and 4 for civil documentation, with 53 children registered over the first week.

- **GBV:** Over the reporting period, over 150 individuals- including adolescents, women, and girls with disabilities as well as local leaders- participated in community consultations and trainings on GBV prevention, referral mechanisms, and care for survivors. In this period, UNHCR received 28 GBV survivors who were referred to relevant partners for follow-up support, including medical treatment.
- **Food Security:** Between 4 and 20 July, 3,882 households at the Musenyi Settlement received food assistance, including through WFP cash-based assistance. In-kind food distributions were also carried out by UNHCR's partner World Relief, which distributed food rations to 300 mostly female-headed households at the Makombe Transit Centre between 14 and 23 July.
- **Education:** Learning level assessments for children aged between 3 and 18 are ongoing to support their [re]integration into education. UNHCR's partner, the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), has been closely coordinating with the Provincial Directorate of Education to support student orientation and identify key needs. Education provision remains a key gap, with over 9,000 school-age refugee children likely to enrol in school ahead of the next academic year. To support this, there is a need to build new classrooms, hire additional teaching staff, and provide education materials.
- **Shelter:** UNHCR's partner COPED continues to support the construction of shelters in the Musenyi Settlement expansion, with 397 of 800 planned tents delivered and installed as of 17 July. Alongside these efforts, UNICEF and the INGO ZOA have been installing new latrine and shower blocks.

Uganda

- **Since January 2025, Uganda has received nearly 70,000 new arrivals from the DRC.** Between 28 July and 3 August, 517 people arrived, about 74 per day, reflecting a stable trend since June and well below the mid-April peak of almost 8,000 per week and the 2025 weekly average of 1,595. However, arrivals between 21 July and 3 August rose by 23 per cent compared to the previous two weeks, with Nyakabande and Sebagoro transit centres seeing significant increases. This uptick may be linked to escalating hostilities in North Kivu and Ituri, although cross-border movements remain restricted by non-state armed groups in the DRC.
- **The funding crisis has led to deep cuts in food assistance for refugees from the DRC in Uganda, with WFP reporting that nine of thirteen settlements are now food insecure.** Reduced assistance is undermining nutrition and threatening peaceful coexistence with host communities as resources dwindle. In April, WFP reduced the number of refugees it assists from 1.6 million to 630,000, while rations for new arrivals from eastern DRC were cut from 100 to 60 per cent and for the most vulnerable households from 60 to 40 per cent.
- While the pressure on transit and reception facilities has receded as the number of new arrivals has dropped, **the Kabanza Reception Centre in Nakivale Refugee Settlement continues to operate at 117 per cent of its designated capacity** with 1,752 individuals currently being hosted in the centre. This has put increased strain on the centre's basic infrastructure, with a reported gap of 52 latrines and a shortfall of 10,512 litres of water per day.

Tanzania

- **Between 1 and 5 August, 12 new arrivals were received in Kigoma.** Currently, 18 individuals are hosted at the National Mining Company reception centre.
- **Between 1 July and 5 August, 387 Congolese new arrivals were relocated from the reception centre in Nyarugusu Refugee Camp to emergency family shelters in the camp,** providing them with privacy and dignity, and helping stabilize and reduce stress for families. This brings the total number of new arrivals moved to emergency family shelters in Nyarugusu Camp

to 2,888 individuals out of a total of 3,124 new arrivals from the DRC relocated to Nyarugusu Camp since 1 January.

- In July, **UNHCR's operational partner, the Disability Relief Services Tanzania, renovated a child-friendly space at the NMC transit centre in Kigoma**, where families arriving from the DRC are temporarily housed. Improvements included fixing and strengthening the swings, merry-go-round, fence, and front gate, plus smoothing out the ground to make it safer for children to play.

Zambia

- **Over the first seven months of the year, Zambia has registered a total of 1,963 new arrivals from the DRC**, of whom 1,041 originate from South Kivu Province and 437 from North Kivu Province. The new arrivals accessed Zambian territory through five entry points in Luapula, Muchinga, and Northern provinces, with 1,460 of all new arrivals from DRC crossing via the Mpulungu entry point. New arrivals have cited conflict and insecurity as the main reasons for their flight.
- **Between 19 June and 1 August, the Office of the Commissioner for Refugees profiled 691 asylum seekers at Makeni Transit Centre in Lusaka to address a backlog of unregistered arrivals, many of whom had bypassed formal entry points.** Of these, 382 were from the DRC and will be referred for screening by the District Joint Operations Committee (DJOC). In line with Zambia's Refugee Policy, all new arrivals are expected to present themselves for DJOC screening at designated entry points; however, a significant number continue to travel directly to Lusaka, creating challenges in managing registration and status determination.
- **Resource constraints continue to limit assistance for new arrivals, leading to stringent prioritization.** In the first seven months of the year, only 292 households, mainly those with heightened vulnerabilities, received a small set of core relief items (blankets and sleeping mats), representing just a fraction of those who arrived. No arrivals have received solar lanterns, which are critical for the safety and dignity of women and girls, and other essential non-food items such as mosquito nets, jerry cans, buckets, and kitchen sets remain unavailable. The lack of these basic supplies significantly increases protection risks and undermines the overall well-being and safety of asylum seekers.
- **Cash-based transfers to new arrivals continue to face significant impediments, primarily due to delayed registration and connectivity challenges.** These technical challenges have prevented many new arrivals from accessing cash support on time, leaving them unable to meet basic needs, specifically food. Plans to shift toward a more targeted cash distribution approach have raised concerns about the ability of both new arrivals and long-term refugees to cover essential needs in the future.

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