

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

Global Appeal 2026 situation overview

Countries affected: Angola, Burundi, DRC, Rwanda, Republic of the Congo, the United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia



Leontina Bunyere, 80, and her family are internally displaced Congolese who tried to return home but found it destroyed and had to return to Sake, a temporary compound nearby where they live now. © UNOCHA/Francis Mweze

2026 Population planning figures

9.9 million forcibly displaced people and returnees



* Includes refugees and asylum-seekers inside the DRC (490K) and Congolese refugees (1.2M) in the neighboring countries

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is in transition towards peace and stabilization but remains one of the world's most complex displacement crisis. Decades of conflict, political instability, economic hardship, recurrent epidemics, and extreme weather events have forced many away from their homes, eroding livelihoods as humanitarian needs soar.

As of September 2025, around 8.2 million people are forcibly displaced across the DRC and will likely increase to 9 million by the end of 2026. Internally displaced persons (IDPs) are expected to rise from nearly 5 million to 5.8 million within the same period.

The escalation of conflict in the eastern provinces of North and South Kivu since early 2025, has also forced 127,000 people to seek safety in Burundi, Rwanda, the United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. Over 1.2 million Congolese refugees are now hosted across Africa, nearly half of them in Uganda.

The DRC also counts more than half a million refugees, over 40% of whom are Rwandan. This refugee population has remained relatively stable since mass arrivals from the CAR in 2021, due to elections-related violence.

UNHCR expects the refugee population to reduce by 25% by the end of 2026, with continuing and planned voluntary returns of around 20,000 people in 2026. This includes 10,000 safe returns to Rwanda, following the June 2025 [Washington Peace Agreement](#), based on the 2010 Tripartite Agreement between the DRC, UNHCR and Rwanda. Returns to Burundi and the Central African Republic (CAR), will also continue.

Diplomatic momentum under the Washington Peace Agreement and the [ongoing Doha peace process](#) is yet to translate into tangible improvements of security and protection. However, it continues to provide strategic opportunities for an integrated response, combining protection, recovery, social cohesion and restoration of state authority, with the aim of supporting sustainable solutions.

Meanwhile, the extensive presence of armed actors is heightening protection risks in eastern DRC. Women and girls face sexual violence and exploitation. Forced recruitment is rife. The country's vast geography and weak infrastructure complicate humanitarian access, driving up operational costs, and leaving many displaced communities in remote, underserved areas.

The humanitarian situation in the DRC is expected to remain critical, with [28 million people acutely food insecure, by the end of 2025, including 10.3 million in the conflict-hit east](#), compounded by a cholera epidemic, with 44,800 cases in the first seven months of 2025.

Under the DRC Humanitarian Response Plan, UNHCR continues to lead the Protection and Shelter Clusters, while overseeing the interagency refugee response. This integrated model strengthens protection outcomes, while promoting accountability and inclusion. But funding cuts since 2025 risk forcing a further scale-back of operations.



Budget needs for the Democratic Republic of the Congo situation in 2026: **\$271 M**

UNHCR's strategy for the DRC aligns with the Protection Strategy and the National Strategic Development Plan. Strategic priorities focus on: improving the legal environment and protection mechanisms; advancing the inclusion of forcibly displaced and stateless people in national structures; strengthening emergency response systems, self-reliance, and solutions; and enhancing strategic partnerships with humanitarian, development, and peace actors to promote sustainable responses.

UNHCR will support the State's accession to, ratification and domestication of international conventions to improve the asylum system, enhance protection and fight statelessness.

Continuing advocacy with the Government and development partners will promote the respect of rights, prevent violence against women and girls and strengthen inclusion of displaced people in existing social systems and national development plans. Emergency response, self-reliance and solutions will be advanced through community-based mechanisms and support to national structures that protect rights and foster durable solutions. This includes Government-facilitated access to land, easing implementation of alternatives-to-camps and enhancing shared responsibility among all actors.

UNHCR will promote early solutions for IDPs through protection monitoring, community empowerment, and support for returns, relocation, or local integration, while safeguarding access to basic services, including eco-friendly shelters.