

## **EASTERN DRC SITUATION**

14 March 2025



*New Congolese asylum seekers at Rugombo reception center in Burundi being registered. ©UNHCR/Charity Nzomo*

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- **[Peace talks](#)** between the Government of the DRC and M23 are reportedly scheduled to begin on 18 March in Angola.
- Following an Extraordinary Summit on 13 March SADC **[announced](#)** the phased withdrawal of the SADC Mission in DRC (SAMIDRC).
- Since the beginning of the year, over **[94,000 people](#)** from DRC have sought protection in neighbouring countries, including some **[66,000](#)** individuals who have been granted prima facie refugee status in Burundi and nearly 25,000 in Uganda.
- The **Burundi and Uganda Contingency Plans have been activated** having met or exceeded the predefined number of arrivals that trigger their activation. **UNHCR in Burundi has activated the Refugee Coordination Model (RCM) in collaboration with the Government.**
- In the DRC, UNHCR in collaboration with partners, continues to carry out **protection monitoring as well as deliver awareness sessions** focusing on community coexistence, conflict management, sexual violence, and mine risks.
- UNHCR, OCHA, AIDES, and Oxfam conducted a joint mission to Sake, North Kivu, where IDP returns have increased after site closures in Goma. **Urgent needs include shelter, food, WASH, and protection, with many relying on host families or makeshift shelters.**
- **[OCHA](#)** estimates that 626,000 people were displaced inside DRC in the four months between October 2024 and January 2025.

- According to the latest update from the [Education Cluster](#) in the DRC **an estimated 692 schools in North Kivu and 5,235 schools in South Kivu remain closed**, having been instructed to shut following the escalation of hostilities in January.
- The [Nutrition Cluster](#) warns that ongoing fighting has **severely disrupted nutrition support in North and South Kivu**.

### Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

- The [President of Angola](#), Joao Lourenco, **has announced that peace talks between the Government of the DRC and M23 will begin in Angola on 18 March**.
- At an Extraordinary Summit on 13 March, SADC Heads of State and Government announced the phased withdrawal of the SADC Mission in DRC (SAMIDRC). A [communiqué](#) issued after the summit confirmed the termination of SAMIDRC's mandate and the start of troop withdrawal.
- **UNHCR, OCHA, AIDES, and Oxfam conducted a joint mission to Sake, North Kivu, where IDP returns have increased after site closures in Goma**. The team assessed health, shelter, and WASH needs, visiting a health facility supported by MSF Belgium, an Oxfam water reservoir, and Kamuronza primary school, now hosting 1,479 IDPs. Many IDPs found their land occupied and had to seek shelter elsewhere. **Urgent needs include shelter, food, WASH, and protection, with many relying on host families or makeshift shelters**.
- Ongoing hostilities in **South Kivu Province** have led to massive displacement, with an inter-agency assessment on **12 March** recording **297,000 newly displaced people in Uvira, 482,000 in Fizi, and 66,500 in Walungu**. The assessment also highlighted alarming levels of sexual violence, with **127 cases reported in Uvira and 260 in Fizi**, affecting women and girls.
- On 12 March UNHCR participated in a North Kivu Province Humanitarian Operational Coordination Meeting (COHP), where it was highlighted that **at least 120,000 IDPs have returned to the Kirotsho health zone in Masisi Territory**.
- UNHCR's partner **INTERSOS** conducted awareness sessions in **North Kivu**, focusing on **community coexistence, conflict management, sexual violence, and mine risks**. Meanwhile, in **South Kivu**, protection monitoring continued, reporting **increased fighting in Uvira Territory**, which displaced **1,365 people (273 households) to Lubarika, Lemera, and Rubanga**.
- UNHCR assisted just over 365 Rwandan refugees to return voluntarily from Goma. Best interest assessments were undertaken for 10 separated children. Some 220 children have been supported through the Child Friendly Space at the transit centre.
- On 12 March, **UNHCR and the National Commission for Refugees (CNR) conducted a detailed review of the situation of urban refugees in Goma**, following recent assessments of their socio-economic conditions. The discussion highlighted key concerns, including challenges faced by refugees with specific needs who have been unable to receive cash assistance due to the liquidity crisis, as well as the plight of those injured or displaced by the ongoing conflict in the city.
- In response to a cholera surge, the Humanitarian Coordinator has **activated the [Anticipatory Action Framework \(AAF\)](#) to strengthen early detection and reduce fatalities, with CERF funding supporting these efforts**. Uvira and Ruzizi health zones have been particularly affected, with 242 cases and 10 deaths reported as of 10 March. To help contain the outbreak, UNHCR, through its partner Action et Intervention pour le Développement Social (AIDES), has distributed chlorine tablets. Additionally, AIDES has trained 529 internally displaced people in collective centers around Goma on hygiene measures to prevent the spread of cholera and Mpox.

- On 12 March [WHO, UNICEF and the EU](#) announced the allocation of **US\$7.38 M** to support the implementation of a national Mpox response plan. These funds will be directed to Equateur, North Kivu, Sankuru and South Kivu, which combined have recorded 58 per cent of new Mpox cases in 2025. Refugees hosted in DRC will be included in the response.
- In Rutshuru Territory, **UNHCR continues to monitor the situation of 753 returnees (151 households) who had returned from Nyiragongo Territory** but were unable to go back to their homes and communities due to the destruction of homes, poor conditions, and ongoing insecurity. They are currently sheltering in collective centers in Rutshuru, with UNHCR prioritizing them for non-food item (NFI) assistance.
- On 11 March UNHCR's government partner, **CNR**, organized a monitoring mission to the **Sange Transit Centre in Uvira territory** to investigate the protection situation of Burundian refugees and asylum seekers accommodated there. According to the mission's findings, no new arrivals have been reported. The centre is currently hosting approximately 130 people awaiting transfer to a safer part of South Kivu province.
- According to the latest update from the [Education Cluster](#) in the DRC **an estimated 692 schools in North Kivu and 5,235 schools in South Kivu remain closed**, having been instructed to shut following the escalation of hostilities in January. In Goma and Nyiragongo territory alone, it is estimated that over 142,000 students have not yet returned to school, while in Beni and Lubero territories in North Kivu an estimated 329,000 students are affected by school closures. In South Kivu it is estimated that over 1.4 M children continue to be deprived of education.
- [OCHA](#) estimates that **626,000 people were displaced inside DRC in the four months between October 2024 and January 2025**. Of these, 125,000 people were displaced in January 2025. The majority of people were displaced from/ within health zones north of Goma, with Lubero health zone observing 222,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) over this period. North Kivu recorded 413,000 newly displaced persons, some 66 per cent of all IDPs recorded. **Over the same period, OCHA also reported 241,000 returnees**, with the Kayna health zone -which straddles the border of Rutshuru and Lubero territories some 160 km north of Goma - recording 103,000 returns.
- The **CCCM cluster, co-led by UNHCR and IOM**, reports that **three collective centers in schools were emptied over the weekend by authorities in control of the area**. UNHCR currently manages 30 collective centers in Goma sheltering 3,712 people and two in Sake housing 1,795 people. Meanwhile, on the Beni axis in North Kivu, landowners expelled IDPs from two collective centers on 10 March, with affected families temporarily taken in by host communities.
- The [Nutrition Cluster](#) warns that ongoing fighting has **severely disrupted nutrition support in North and South Kivu**. Looting in Goma and Bukavu led to the loss of key supplies, including high-energy peanut paste for malnourished children and fortified cereal for vulnerable groups. Some of these stolen supplies are now being sold in informal markets, where they may be misused and could pose health risks to the population

### Regional Updates

- As of 13 March, **over 94,000 people have fled the DRC to neighboring countries since the start of the year, with most arriving in Burundi**. Movements remain high, with over 9,500 new arrivals reported in the past seven days, particularly in Uganda and Burundi. A verification exercise at Gihanga transit center led to an adjustment in Burundi's total arrivals.
- **Updated inter-agency contingency plans for Burundi, Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania and Zambia have either been finalized or are in the process of finalization**, with the Angola operation also currently working on an updated inter-agency plan. The Burundi and Uganda



Contingency Plans have been activated having met or exceeded the predefined number of arrivals that trigger their activation.

- **In response to the emergency, UNHCR in Burundi s activated the Refugee Coordination Model (RCM) in collaboration with the Government of Burundi.** An inter-agency coordination forum convened by UNHCR and comprising key Government counterparts, including the Ministry of Interior, has been established while sector coordination capacity is also being bolstered. Basic Information Management coordination tools- including a [5Ws reporting mechanism](#)- have also been put in place to support day-to-day operational coordination.
- **The Burundi chapter of the 2024–2025 DRC Regional Refugee Response Plan is being updated to reflect the growing needs of new arrivals,** with revised planning figures and financial requirements. The new emergency needs will be clearly outlined within the overall response plan and fully aligned with the Emergency Inter-Agency Appeal, which UNHCR is developing in consultation with partners.
- The latest figures on new arrivals to neighbouring countries are reflected in the Eastern DRC Displacement Dashboard and Burundi CORE, which is updated daily and available on the [Operational Data Portal](#)

Country	Total New Arrivals* since 1 Jan (as of 13 March unless stated)	Arrivals in Past 7 Days
Burundi	66,379	4,285
Uganda	25,581	5,062
Zambia	811 (as of 11 March)	30
Rwanda	916	24
Tanzania	400	173
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>94,087</b>	<b>9,574</b>

*\*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 need*

## Burundi

- As of 10 March, almost **65,000 people in need of international protection have arrived in DRC since the beginning of this year.** While the numbers of daily arrivals have reduced over recent days, the daily rate of arrival remains significantly higher than precrisis levels. The majority of these new arrivals- almost 47,000- continue to be hosted in the temporary site established in the stadium in Rugombo.
- The Government of Burundi and UNHCR have agreed **to increase the number of convoys relocating refugees from the Rugombo stadium and Cibitoke zone to existing refugee settlements, including Musenyi, from 3 to 5 times a week.** This will help reduce overcrowding in the arrival sites and provide refugees with more dignified living conditions.
- Between 8-9 March, field mission to Rugombo and Gihanga to assess the situation of new arrivals and identify protection and humanitarian needs. **The mission highlighted critical protection concerns, with many new arrivals having experienced trauma or exploitation.** Health facilities require additional medicines, equipment, and strengthened disease surveillance. WASH infrastructure remains inadequate, with only 35 latrines for

47,000 people, far below emergency standards, and a need for more water points and storage. While emergency shelters have been scaled up, gaps persist, particularly with the rainy season approaching.

- UNHCR continues to coordinate the inter-agency response in support of the Government of Burundi. During a recent coordination meeting with partners, several partners have pledged to scale-up assistance including **WHO, who are committed to donating 60,000 mosquito nets, and World Relief, who will provide core relief items to 1,500 households.**
- On 5 March, a UNHCR multifunctional team, visited a provisional site identified by the Bweru Municipal Administrator for new refugees arriving from the DRC. Located 7 km from Bwagiriza camp and less than 5 km from Nyankanda camp, **the 43-hectare site could accommodate up to 20,000 people. Site preparations are underway, with ongoing discussions with authorities to ensure essential services are in place.**

### Rwanda

- The number of new arrivals from the DRC to Rwanda has remained low, **with 24 arrivals recorded in the past week.** UNHCR and its partners continue to monitor the situation closely.

### Tanzania

- A total of **173 Congolese were registered in Tanzania in the past week**, bringing the total number who have arrived since the beginning of the year to 400.
- **A seven-day joint border mission to entry points along Lake Tanganyika began on 11 March**, led by the Zonal Coordinator from the Ministry of Home Affairs' Office in Kigoma. The team, which includes the Refugee Services Department, Regional Immigration Office, and UNHCR, is monitoring new arrivals from the DRC and assessing protection needs at entry points.

### Uganda

- Since the beginning of 2025, **over 25,000 forcibly displaced people from DRC have sought refuge in Uganda**; this represents a roughly 500 per cent increase from the same period in 2024.
- The **majority of new arrivals have fled from Rutshuru Territory in North Kivu or Goma city**, with over half of all new arrivals entering via Kisoro (Bunagana, Nteko and Busanza). Most of these asylum seekers report armed conflict, looting, sexual violence, arbitrary killings, hunger and lack of basic service as the primary reasons for their flight.
- **Under the Government of Uganda's leadership, UNHCR and partners are providing multi-sectoral support to new arrivals.** This includes medical screening, measles vaccinations, and registration, with vulnerable individuals identified for specialized assistance. At transit centers, asylum seekers receive shelter, food, clean water, and essential items. Once registered, refugees are transported to settlements, where they undergo biometric registration and receive emergency shelter kits and household supplies.
- **A sharp increase in arrivals has put significant pressure on the response to new asylum seekers and refugees, straining reception and transit centers, some of which are operating at over 400% capacity.** Overcrowding is worsening living conditions, increasing the risk of disease outbreaks, and stretching essential services. In Matanda and Nyakabande, there are severe shortages of latrines and bathing facilities, while gaps in health services have led to child deaths (two) and high malnutrition rates. The congestion is also affecting logistics and registration, causing delays in processing and transferring refugees to settlements.

### Zambia

- Following a data review in Zambia, the number of new arrivals from the DRC **has been revised to 811, down from the previously reported 1,400**. This figure includes only Congolese nationals arriving from DRC and does not account for people of other nationalities coming from DRC or other countries.

**Contacts**

Tina Ghelli – Head of External Engagement, Regional Bureau for Southern Africa  
([ghelli@unhcr.org](mailto:ghelli@unhcr.org))

Edward Ogolla – Communications Officer, Regional Bureau for Southern Africa ([ogolla@unhcr.org](mailto:ogolla@unhcr.org))