

UPDATE ON NEW ARRIVALS FROM THE EASTERN DRC

12 March 2025

In Uganda, there has been a continued increase in the number of new arrivals with 24,763 forcibly displaced people arriving since January this year. This is following an escalation in December 2024 of armed violence in the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of Congo. There are 7.8 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the DRC, with 3.8 million in South and North Kivu Provinces. Meanwhile, **1.1 million Congolese refugees** have fled to neighbouring countries, with **over 50% residing in Uganda**. This flow across the border into Uganda is expected to continue.

The total number of new arrivals across the border is 24,763. From that, 18,249 individuals have been already registered. The figures below include the arrival of 1,200 to Kisoro on March 11, 2025.

Months	New Arrivals	Registered
January	7,377	3,979
February	10,031	7,572
March (as of 11 March)	7,355	6,698
Total	24,763	18,249

As a comparison, in 2024, Uganda received 4,925 new arrivals for the period of 1 Jan - 11 Mar. This is a 500% increase for the same period in 2025.



Entry Points:

There are three major entry points for the new arrivals from DRC, which are Kisoro, Kanungu and Kikuube. Of the arrivals, 56% arrived via Kisoro (Bunagana, Nteko, Busanza), 29% via Kanungu (Butogota, Kahenyi, Kyeshero), 12% via Kikuube (Sebagoro), 3% via Zombo and Koboko (Padha, Birijaku), and 1% via Kasese, Bundibugyo & Ntoroko.

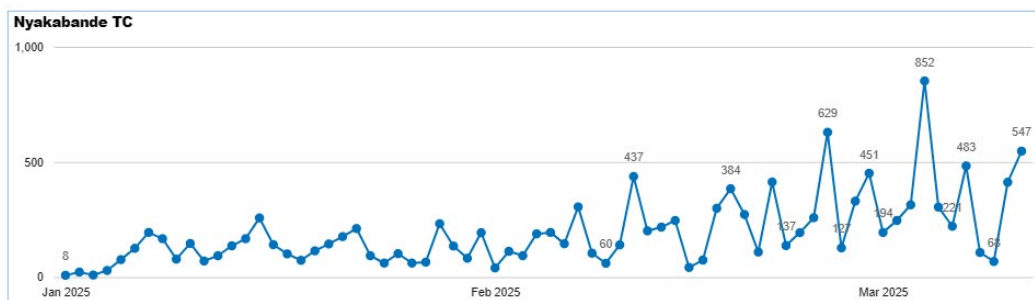


A UNHCR official receives a boat of 351 new arrivals from DRC at Sebagoro Landing site, Kikuube district. Photo ©Tophious Chali

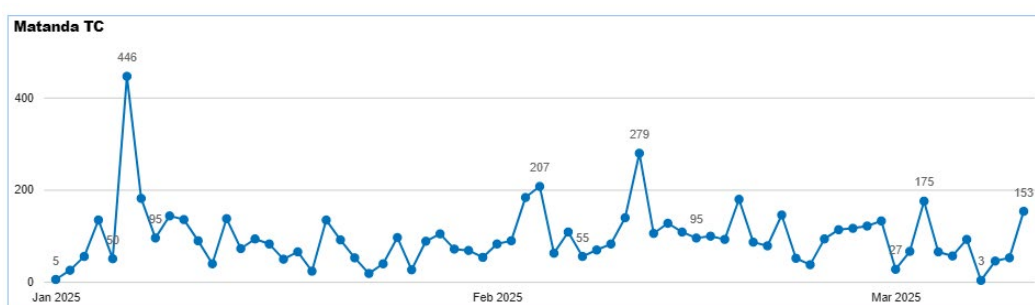
Most arrivals fled from Rutshuru (Kiseguru, Katweguru, Kisharu, Nyamirima, Kisigari, Busanja), Masisi, and three communes of Goma (Goma, Karisimbi, Nyiragongo, Mugarama). Most asylum seekers from Goma entered through Bunagana. The primary reasons cited for fleeing include ongoing armed conflict, looting, rape, killings, hunger, and the collapse of social services.

Those coming in through Kikuube district are mainly from Joo, Tchomia and Nyamamba. These areas have been the epicenter of the renewed ethnic clashes. Those fleeing cited human rights abuses including maiming, killing and forceful conscription into the army, especially for the young men.

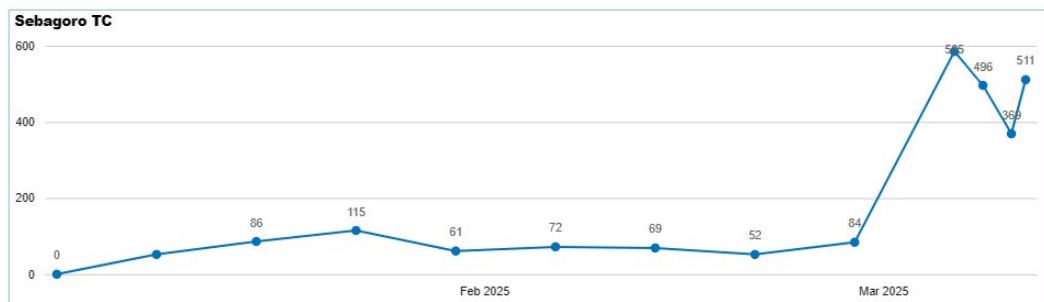
Arrival Trends:



Refugees arriving during February and March into Nyakabande Transit Centre cited an increase in violence in most of the areas under the control of M23. This has led to looting, arbitrary killing of civilians, kidnapping of civilians by militia groups, rape of women and girls. Other reasons include breakdown of social services like banking, education, and health in areas where the fighting is ongoing like Goma, Bukavu, Masisi, and Bukoma. Hunger has been a concern with reported difficulty to access gardens and closure of businesses, food production has been affected. The few goods stored in shops have become expensive and at the same time individuals have less money. Some have followed their families who previously fled to Uganda.



The spike in Matanda during the month of January was due to an attack against the M23 position, that led to large displacement to Uganda. Otherwise, similar reasons for flight were reported as those who arrived in Nyakabande.



The spike in new arrivals through Sebagoro, Kikuube district is reportedly due to ethnic conflict in Joo, Tchomia and Nyamamba, in Eastern DRC. There have been several influxes across Sebagoro throughout the years, including June 2019, December 2020, and mid-2023.

Bubukwanga transit centre has relatively low numbers, with the highest daily figure being 37 individuals since the year started.

Response by UNHCR and Partners:

- New arrivals are screened for malnutrition and medical conditions, vaccinated for measles, and registered by the Government of Uganda. Vulnerable individuals are identified for specialized support, and efforts are made to reunify families separated during their journey. Refugees are provided with a space to sleep, hot food, access to bathing facilities, health promotion activities, and safe drinking water to ensure basic hygiene standards and prevent disease spread. Once registered, refugees are transported to the settlement.
- New arrivals are provided with non-food items (NFIs) such as blankets, sleeping mats, jerrycans, basins, sanitary napkins, women's underwear, and soap. These items are distributed at collection points, transit, or reception centers. Additionally, new arrivals receive emergency shelter kits and other household NFI kits once they are biometrically registered and in the settlement.

Challenges:

- There is severe and worsening overcrowding in some reception and transit centers like Matanda (417%) and Nyakabande (391%). There is a heightened risk of medical outbreaks because of this overcrowding. It is also putting a strain on resources like WASH, protection, health, shelter, and nutrition needs. The overcrowding also increases the risk of violence towards women and PSEA.
- In Matanda, there were 2 deaths of children under 5 during the 15-27 February reporting period reportedly due to severe anaemia and neonatal death. There is a gap of 35 bathing facilities when using the standard of one per 50 people. There is also a gap of 125 latrine stands when using the standard of one per 20 people.
- In Nyakabande, there is a gap of 127 latrine stances when using the standard of one latrine stance for each 20 people. There is also a gap of 66 bathing facilities when using the standard of one per 50 people. There were 53 children (41 moderate and 12 severe) found to be malnourished out of 484 children assessed.
- The overcrowding is due to significant new arrivals, registration and processing time requirements, and stress on the fleet of buses for their transport to settlements. Kabazana reception center, which receives most of the DRC new arrivals, is slightly overcrowded due to the refugees waiting for their status

determination and Burundian recyclers. There are ongoing efforts to increase the capacity of registration staff and ensure timely plot allocation.

- Some of the refugees in Kabazana reception center are still awaiting determination of their refugee status, as well as some recyclers from Burundi. They occupy about 40% of the reception center, which in turn leads to fewer refugees being received from the transit centers. Efforts are being made to expedite the processing of these persons, as well as vacate the reception infrastructure of any persons who are not asylum seekers or refugees.