

EASTERN DRC SITUATION

04 April 2025



Congolese refugee Chancelline holds her baby while being registered for UNHCR support in Rugombo, Cibitoke Province Burundi. ©UNHCR/Charity Nzomo

HIGHLIGHTS

- **The security situation across eastern DRC remains highly volatile. Human rights violations, including reprisal killings and abductions, continue to be reported.**
- UNHCR and its partners continue to carry out key activities under its protection mandate across North and South Kivu, including **protection monitoring, awareness-raising, referral and case management, and participation in joint assessments.**
- UNHCR's **protection monitoring in Uvira Territory** observed a **gradual return of internally displaced persons to their areas of origin, following a relative calm.** However, armed groups remain active in these areas, making it unsafe for returnees.
- **On 4 April, the European Commission pledged €40 million in humanitarian assistance for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).**
- **Ongoing violence in North and South Kivu in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) continues to kill, injure and displace civilians, [OCHA](#) has warned.**
- **Efforts to ease tensions in eastern DRC are ongoing, with [dialogue](#) between involved parties scheduled to take place on 9 April in Doha.** This follows two rounds of discussions facilitated in Qatar last month between the governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda.
- **According to [WFP](#), conflict and rising food prices are pushing acute hunger to the highest level ever recorded in the DRC, with nearly a quarter of the DRC's total population facing acute food insecurity.**

- Over **113,000 people have fled from DRC to neighbouring countries** since the beginning of the year. While the number of new arrivals being recorded in Burundi over the past seven days has decreased, Uganda continues to record a daily average of over 550 individuals for the past week.

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

- **UNHCR's protection monitoring in eastern DRC continues to expose alarming levels of violence and abuse targeting civilians.** Armed groups remain active across territories, including Masisi, Rutshuru, Nyiragongo, Goma, Lubero, Uvira, and Fizi, where reports of abductions, sexual violence, extortion, and targeted killings persist. In addition to the continued insecurity, growing concerns have emerged around retaliatory attacks, the rise in toll barriers operated by armed elements, and renewed clashes leading to population displacement.
- **UNHCR's protection monitoring in Uvira Territory has observed a gradual return of internally displaced persons to their areas of origin, following a relative calm. However, armed groups remain active in these areas, making it unsafe for returnees.** Protection monitoring also identified a serious incident at Kamvivira Transit Centre, where two Burundian refugees were assaulted by elements of the Wazalendo militia. In the Beni Territory, monitoring activities have indicated no recent armed attacks, with civilians reportedly returning to Kamahume and Mabalako towns in the Baswagha-Madiwe ward following the withdrawal of rival armed groups.
- **On 4 April, the European Commission pledged €40 million in humanitarian assistance for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).** It comes as the EU, the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator and the African Union Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian Affairs, and Social Development co-hosted a high-level roundtable event on the drastically deteriorating humanitarian situation in the eastern DRC.
- On 31 March 2025, **UNHCR, along with other UN agencies (IOM, OCHA, UNFPA, UNICEF, and WFP), met with ECHO and representatives as part of their week-long mission across the Eastern DRC, Rwanda, and Burundi.** The ECHO delegations sought the perspectives of UN agencies on the crisis and the way forward. ECHO reaffirmed its commitment to support through response, logistics, and advocacy.
- **Ongoing violence in North and South Kivu (DRC) continues to kill, injure and displace civilians, OCHA has warned.** In North Kivu, intense clashes between local armed groups and the M23 group have been reported on 3 April in the town of Masisi Centre. Preliminary reports indicated at least two civilian fatalities and multiple injuries, with several wounded evacuated to Masisi General Hospital.
- The DRC government's National Commission for Refugees (CNR) and UNHCR continue to follow up on protection cases involving urban refugees. On 1 April 2025, five individual cases were reviewed in Goma, including those related to detention, security, and health concerns. Notably, the whereabouts of two refugees who had been arrested two weeks earlier were identified, allowing for follow-up on their current situation.
- UNHCR, and its partner INTERSOS, continues to implement protection activities aimed at addressing inter-community tensions, promoting peaceful coexistence, and mitigating protection risks. Between 1 and 2 April 2025, multiple sessions were held in Goma, Nyiragongo, Beni, and Lubero with the participation of over 100 individuals, including IDPs and host community members. Activities included awareness-raising on disinformation and inclusion, dialogues on ethnic tensions, community management, and access to resources, as well as discussions on the challenges facing Local Peace and Development Committees operating in areas under the control of non-state armed groups.

- Eight cases of GBV relating to women and girls were reported this week. The survivors were provided with psychosocial support while those having been raped were referred to a medical facility within 72 hours.
- In South Kivu, protection monitoring in collaboration with INTERSOS and local community mechanisms confirmed the **forced displacement of 125 households** following clashes between two armed groups in the Ziralo highlands and Chambombo. At the same time, **return movements were observed involving over 1,200 refugee and internally displaced persons, returning from Bujumbura** and other displacement sites near Uvira.
- According to [WFP](#), **Conflict and rising food prices are pushing acute hunger to the highest level ever recorded in the DRC, with 28 million people - almost a quarter of the DRC's total population - facing acute food insecurity**, according to the latest Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) assessment of food security, published on 27 March 2025.

Regional Updates

- **As of 4 April, over 113,000 people have fled the DRC to neighbouring countries since the beginning of the year, with the majority arriving in Burundi and Uganda.** There were no new arrivals recorded in Burundi in the past six days, while Uganda continues to record a daily average of over 550 individuals for the past week.
- While not directly related to the situation in eastern DRC, **ethnic Bolobo and Kwamouth territories (Mai-Ndombe Province, DRC) in March forced over 2,500 people to flee to the Republic of the Congo.**
- 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 2 April unless specified)	Arrivals in the Past 7 Days
Burundi	70,011 (as of 31 March)	33
Uganda	38,913	3,957
Zambia	1,010 (as of 1 April)	1,010
Rwanda	1,523 (as of 1 April)	28
Tanzania	2,021	469
TOTAL	113,393	5,497

**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 2 April, over 70,000 refugees have arrived in Burundi since the beginning of 2025.** Of these, 26,707 were registered and 13,190 were relocated to different sites. Following the provincial governor's directive, arrivals at Rugombo Stadium were halted, with around 10,000 individuals transferred to Musenyi.
- Almost **2,000 individuals have reportedly returned to the DRC through various crossing points.** However, only one boat is currently operating on the DRC side at Mparabo, resulting in long queues and raising safety concerns for those crossing the Rusizi River.
- **On 1 April H.E. Angeline Ndayishimiye, First Lady of Burundi, accompanied by the UNHCR Representative and other partners, visited refugees in the Cibitoke zone.** During the visit, she expressed her support and donated food items, dignity kits, and recreational materials for children as a gesture of solidarity. Refugee leaders expressed their appreciation to the Government of Burundi for the warm reception and hospitality they received during this challenging time.

- The distribution of essential supplies by UNHCR and partners is ongoing at the Musenyi refugee site, where 10,703 refugees have been relocated. **On 1 and 2 April, 654 refugee households (3,811 individuals) received essential supplies.** So far, a total of 11,755 items, including blankets, sleeping mats, jerrycans, buckets, kitchen sets, solar lamps, and mosquito nets, were distributed. However, stock levels are running low, and the needs remain significant.
- **Following the relocation of additional refugees to the Musenyi site, the number of humanitarian partners in Rutana Province has almost doubled.** However, operations are constrained by transportation challenges, with only one shared vehicle available that accommodates up to eight people. Partners have requested UNHCR's support to strengthen transport capacity and ensure effective delivery of protection and assistance.
- UNHCR signed a **USD one million agreement with the Swiss Cooperation to support refugees.**
- UNHCR and partners are working to strengthen their operational response to meet the urgent needs of new arrivals.

Protection:

- UNHCR continues to support protection desks, referral pathways, and targeted assistance for vulnerable groups, including children at risk and survivors of gender-based violence (GBV).
- Protection actors identified individuals with heightened vulnerabilities (disabilities, chronic illnesses, pregnant women, and survivors of violence). Ensuring accessible facilities and distributing non-food items (NFIs) and hygiene kits are urgent needs.
- On 2 April, child protection partners carried out an assessment at the Musenyi refugee site to evaluate the situation of vulnerable children. The assessment highlighted several challenges, including the limited capacity of partners to properly assess and follow up on identified cases. In response to the presence of unaccompanied and separated children (UASC), efforts are underway to place them in foster care, with 15 foster families already identified, still short of the target of 40 families needed.
- Gender-Based Violence (GBV): Several survivors approached protection partners for psychosocial and medical assistance. UNFPA dignity kits are on-site but not yet distributed, emphasizing the need to expedite GBV-related support.
- Protection actors identified individuals with heightened vulnerabilities (disabilities, chronic illnesses, pregnant women, and survivors of violence). Ensuring accessible facilities and distributing non-food items (NFIs) and hygiene kits are urgent needs.

Health:

- Cholera outbreaks, cases of malaria, diarrhea, and suspected tuberculosis remain critical. Four children died at Musenyi. UNHCR and partners are intensifying sensitization campaigns to inform refugee families about health services available.

Essential Services:

- Hot meal tokens and food rations were distributed, but complaints of missed distributions are under verification.
- Ongoing construction of a second warehouse to store NFIs; water collection schedules are being adjusted to reduce mud accumulation.

Shelter:

- As of 2 April, a total of 301 tents had been installed at the Musenyi refugee site. The selection of beneficiaries was carried out by a joint team comprising the National Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons, UNHCR, HealthNet TPO, Save the Children, and representatives of the refugee committee, ensuring a participatory and transparent process. In parallel, efforts to improve WASH conditions are ongoing, with six additional latrine pits completed and six more currently under construction.

Uganda

- **Since January, Uganda has nearly 39,000 new arrivals from the DRC.** These figures have exceeded contingency plan thresholds, and existing capacities are further strained by simultaneous displacements from other neighbouring countries.
- **UNHCR and partners are working to strengthen their operational response to meet the urgent needs of new arrivals,** enhancing life-saving protection and assistance at reception and transit locations, ensuring safe and expedited processing of arrivals, and improving settlement conditions.
- The Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) **quadrupled the number of registration staff at Nyakabande Transit Centre** to speed up biometric registration., This has expedited the relocation to the settlement, depending on the availability of buses, which UNHCR is renting commercially and utilizing reprioritized resources to supplement the fleet. Advocacy is ongoing for increased registration capacity in Matanda.
- **Four new communal shelters were temporarily rehabilitated in a holding area outside the Nyakabande Transit Centre to accommodate approximately 1,000 individuals.** All available spaces are being used to shelter new arrivals, including the registration and kitchen area.
- **Relocation from Nyakabande and Matanda remained a priority,** with 3,903 individuals transferred to the Kabazana reception centre in Nakivale, and 2,913 relocated to the Juru zone in the settlement, as of 27 March 2025.
- The situation in refugee transit and reception facilities in Uganda remains challenging, with significant pressure on resources due to overcrowding.
 - **Food Security:** New arrivals across all reception centres are receiving three hot meals a day, in line with minimum humanitarian standards (Sphere standard: 2,100 kcal/day).
 - **Health:** All transit and reception centres continue to conduct basic medical screenings for new arrivals to identify urgent health needs early. Two deaths of children under five were reported—one each in Nyakabande and Matanda—both attributed to pneumonia. Preventive health services are ongoing, with vaccinations administered across sites: 469 children received measles vaccines, 326 were vaccinated against polio, 278 received Vitamin A supplements, and 278 were dewormed.
 - **Protection:** Efforts to ramp up biometric registration are underway, but in some transit centres still remains outpaced by the high number of new arrivals. As a result, many asylum seekers face delays in accessing protection services and being relocated.
 - **WASH:** There is a critical shortage of sanitation infrastructure in multiple transit centers. Water provision generally meets the minimum standard (≥ 15 liters/person/day) in most centres
 - **Shelter and Capacity:** Severe overcrowding occurs due to the continuous high arrival numbers exceeding transit centre capacities. Some transit centres, like Nyakabande, are operating at 600 percent occupancy capacity
 - **Nutrition:** Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) rates among children under five remain below the emergency threshold of 2% in all centres, with the exception of Matanda, which slightly exceeds the threshold at 2.3%. Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) rates are well within acceptable levels across all sites.

Tanzania

- As of 2 April, over **2,000 asylum seekers from the DRC have arrived in Tanzania** since the beginning of the year through various border crossing points, including the Lake Tanganyika and land borders, through Burundi. **Over the past two weeks, we have observed an increase in daily arrivals. This follows joint border visits and monitoring** by the Refugee Services Department, Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, and UNHCR, which took place in mid-March 2025.

- The draft contingency plan for the DRC situation in Tanzania has been revised using a planning figure of 25,000 individuals. **It is currently under review by the multifunctional team in Tanzania and will be activated if daily arrivals exceed 500.**

Zambia

- The number of asylum seeker arrivals in Zambia has remained steady, **with 74 individuals recorded over the past seven days. This brings the total number of arrivals since the beginning of the year to 1,010.** While not large in scale, the consistent flow underscores the continued need for monitoring and support to ensure timely assistance and protection.

Rwanda

- A steady number of Rwandans continue to return home from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Since January 2025, Rwanda has received 1,523 new arrivals, including returnees.

Republic of the Congo (Displacement unrelated to the violence in Eastern DRC)

- **The latest escalation of inter-communal violence in Bolobo and Kwamouth territories (Mai-Ndombe Province, DRC) in March forced over 2,500 people to flee** to Bouémba, Makotimpoko, and Mpouya in the Plateaux Department of the Republic of the Congo, bringing the total number of arrivals this year to 5,808.
- **Between 22 March and 1 April, a pre-registration exercise was conducted for new arrivals in Ngabé, Bouémba, Makotimpoko, and Mpouya.** With logistical support from UNHCR—including vehicles to transport government teams such as National Commission for Refugee Assistance (CNAR) to Bouémba—local authorities registered 2,500 individuals recently displaced by community violence in Bolobo and Kwamouth, Mai-Ndombe Province.
- In Bouémba, Gamboma district, an assessment of the **housing and living conditions of newly displaced persons revealed that among the 1,896 people received between 22 and 26 March, approximately 1,500 are living in overcrowded classrooms at Bouémba Primary School** under extremely precarious conditions. Key challenges include poor sanitation, with only two blocks of latrines and a non-functional water pump, limited access to healthcare and food, and inadequate educational infrastructure. Also, the use of classrooms as shelters and the school canteen as a communal kitchen is expected to prevent nearly 1,200 primary and preschool learners from resuming classes as planned on 7 April.
- **Medical screening of new arrivals in Bouémba was conducted by UNHCR and Médecins d’Afrique in collaboration with the Gamboma District Health Authorities.** A total of 73 households (240 individuals) were screened. Among the 31 breastfeeding women examined, 13 were found to have moderate acute malnutrition and three severe acute malnutrition, all of whom are now receiving treatment at the Bouémba Integrated Health Center (CSI). Eight pregnant women were referred to the CSI for prenatal care and vaccination updates. Additionally, 19 children with moderate acute malnutrition are currently under treatment, and three individuals with chronic illnesses have been identified and placed under medical care.
- As part of efforts to improve **coordination in response to urgent needs, local authorities have established crisis committees in affected sub-prefectures to oversee the delivery of assistance and protection.** Public security forces and civil authorities are also supporting newly displaced individuals, who are currently accommodated in classrooms and with host families.
- WFP and UNHCR are working to improve food distribution and update beneficiary lists in Makotimpoko. UNHCR Partner, *Association pour la Protection des Personnes Vulnérables et Enfants* (APPE) is leading community mobilization for pre-registration. Médecins d’Afrique is providing emergency medical care, while the Congolese Red Cross and Catholic Relief Services

are conducting household assessments and preparing WASH, GBV, and community engagement interventions in Mpouya.

Contacts

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

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

Timothy Young – External Relations Officer, Regional Bureau for Southern Africa
(youngt@unhcr.org)