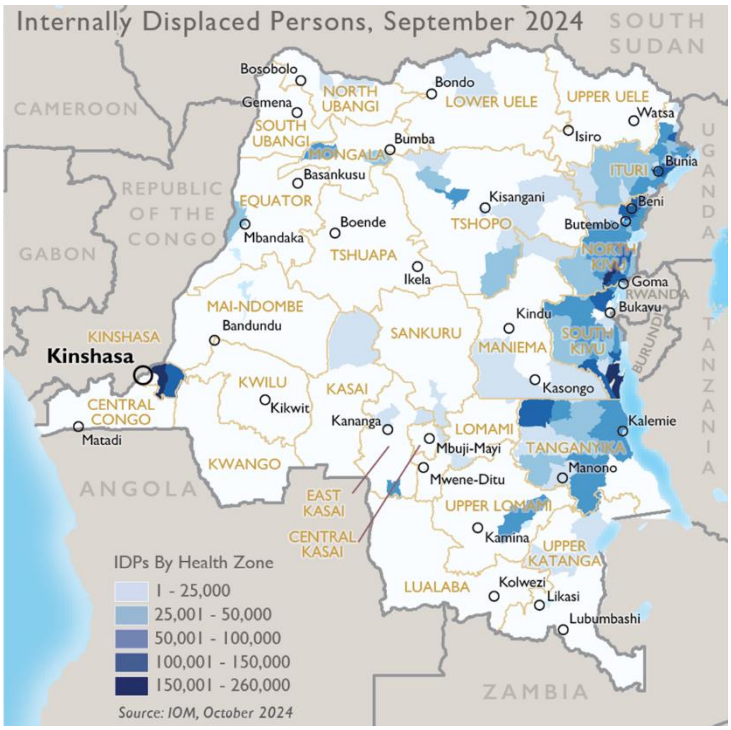
Democratic Republic of the Congo – Complex Emergency

DECEMBER 19, 2024

SITUATION AT A GLANCE

113.6 MILLION	25.4 MILLION	6.9 MILLION	1.1 MILLION	520,235
Population of the DRC	People in Need of Humanitarian Assistance	IDPs in the DRC	Congolese Refugees and Asylum-Seekers in Nearby Countries	Refugees and Asylum-Seekers Sheltering in the DRC
UN – December 2023	*UN – February 2024*	*IOM – September 2024*	*UNHCR – October 2024*	*UNHCR – October 2024*

- Clashes between the FARDC, FARDC-aligned armed groups, and M23 in North Kivu Province's Lubero, Masisi, and Walikale territories resulted in widespread displacement and increased humanitarian needs in November and early December, according to relief actors. The use of heavy weapons during hostilities has hindered relief actor's movement into affected areas.
- Fighting between the Mobondo militia group and the FARDC in western DRC's Kwango and Mai-Ndombe provinces continued to threaten civilian safety and drive displacement.
- Flooding and landslides following heavy rains in eastern DRC's Ituri and South Kivu provinces adversely affected more than 100,000 people between October and late November.



KEY DEVELOPMENTS

Clashes Between FARDC and M23 in Lubero, Masisi, and Walikale Drive Displacement and Humanitarian Needs

The security environment in North Kivu Province of eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) remained volatile in November and December due to clashes between the Armed Forces of the DRC (FARDC), FARDC-aligned Wazalendo groups, and the March 23 Movement (M23), with indiscriminate use of heavy artillery shelling and bombardments in populated areas resulting in civilian casualties and elevated protection concerns. Between December 2 and 13, heavy fighting in southern Lubero Territory—primarily in Katwa, Kaseghe, Luofu, and Miombwe localities—resulted in at least 17 civilian deaths and the displacement of at least 48,000 people, according to relief actors and local media. Displaced populations primarily fled to less conflict-affected areas within Lubero or southward into Masisi Territory and are largely sheltering in host communities or school buildings that lack access to latrines and safe drinking water, increasing health risks. The influx of internally displaced persons (IDPs) is also exerting pressure on already limited resources in host communities throughout Lubero. Amid increased needs, humanitarian actors face increasing challenges accessing conflict zones and IDP host communities due to unpredictable clashes, hindering their ability to reach vulnerable populations with much-needed humanitarian assistance, local media report. Notably, nearly 9,000 IDPs sheltering in collective centers and host communities in Lubero's Bingi and Itundwe health zones had received no humanitarian assistance as of December 13, relief actors report.

Since late October, fighting between the FARDC and M23 has also escalated along the Mpeti–Pinga and Mweso–Pinga axes in North Kivu's Masisi and Walikale territories, causing widespread displacement. Fighting in Walikale resulted in the deaths of at least 34 civilians, injury to several others, and the displacement of more than 100,000 people—mainly children and women—between October 21 and December 16, the UN reports. The majority of IDPs were residing in the General Hospital and Ikobo locality of Walikale's Pinga Health Zone as of early December. Similarly, FARDC–M23 clashes in Masisi—characterized by the use of artillery and similar long-range projectiles near populated areas—displaced more than 50,000 people, many of whom were sheltering in host communities, abandoned residences, and collective centers with limited access to food or livelihoods during the same reporting period. The priority needs of displaced persons along the Mpeti–Pinga and Mweso–Pinga axes were food, health, protection, shelter, and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) as of November.

In total, nearly 2 million people remained displaced by the M23 crisis in North Kivu and South Kivu as of November 30, including approximately 945,000 IDPs sheltering among host families, an estimated 868,000 sheltering across formal IDP sites, and nearly 133,000 sheltering in collective centers and informal sites, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

FARDC–Mobondo Conflict in Western DRC Results in Displacement and Civilian Deaths

Fighting between the FARDC and Mobondo, an alliance of Yaka-affiliated armed groups, continues to endanger civilians in western DRC's Kwango and Mai-Ndombe provinces in early December, with fighting in Kwango's Popokabaka Territory—located approximately 240 miles southeast of the DRC's capital city of Kinshasa—resulting in at least 12 civilian deaths, the burning of several homes, and the displacement of an unconfirmed number of people between December 6 and 9, according to international media. IDPs fleeing persistent gunfire in affected areas face dire conditions and lack access to humanitarian assistance, local media report. During the same period, other Mobondo factions launched raids against civilians in Mai-Ndombe's Kwamouth Territory, resulting in the deaths of at least

ten civilians and the kidnapping of several others, according to regional media. Overall, insecurity in western DRC's Kwango, Kwilu, and Mai-Ndombe provinces since 2022 has displaced at least 500,000 people and generated high levels of humanitarian needs, with IDPs facing prolonged period without receiving assistance, increasing their vulnerability, relief actors report.

ADF Continues Attacks Against Civilian Populations in Beni and Irumu

Civilians in northern North Kivu and southern Ituri provinces continue to face displacement, protection and safety concerns, and heightened needs for humanitarian assistance to meet basic needs due to Allied Democratic Forces (ADF)-attributed attacks in late 2024. ADF-attributed attacks in North Kivu's Beni Territory on December 1 and 3 resulted in the deaths of at least 23 people and the looting and burning of dozens of homes, prompting an unconfirmed number of households to flee to safer areas, local media report. The persistent presence of ADF and other armed actors in Beni also continues to discourage the return of IDPs. In Ituri's Irumu Territory, attacks by ADF elements in several villages led to the deaths of four people, injury of seven other individuals, and the displacement of at least 6,300 people on November 5, according to relief actors. During the attacks, ADF elements also kidnapped 12 people, set fire to 67 homes, and looted personal items, disrupting access to shelter and basic household essentials. Displaced individuals affected by ADF attacks in Beni and Irumu faced urgent needs for food and shelter assistance, in addition to other humanitarian support as of early December, according to relief actors. In response to needs Beni, USAID/BHA supports four partners to provide health, nutrition, protection, shelter, and WASH support to affected populations.

Flooding in Ituri and South Kivu Affects More Than 100,000 People

Above-average rainfall and related flooding affected and increased humanitarian needs for more than 100,000 people across eastern DRC's Ituri and South Kivu provinces—areas already facing conflict-related vulnerabilities—between October and late November, according to the UN. In South Kivu's Uvira Territory, torrential rains between October 30 and November 15 displaced more than 9,500 people, most of whom are sheltering in precarious conditions and urgently require food, health care, shelter, protection, and WASH support, according to IOM. Additionally, heavy rains and landslides in South Kivu's Kalehe Territory on November 22 and 23 caused at least 11 deaths, destroyed or damaged 41 residences, and eroded agricultural soils, leading to a decline in crop production, relief actors report. Earlier in October, flooding and landslides—as well as armed clashes between the FARDC, M23, and other armed groups—had already displaced an estimated 77,000 people across seven of South Kivu's eight territories, according to the UN. These severe weather events also hindered relief actors' ability to travel along National Road 2 in Kalehe, disrupting access to populations in need.

In Ituri, heavy rainfall and the overflow of Lake Albert caused widespread flooding across nearly 80 villages in Djugu, Irumu, and Mahagi territories between November 1 and 30, affecting approximately 55,000 people, according to the UN and local media. Mahagi experienced the most severe impacts among the three territories, with more than 30,000 people displaced, approximately 12,000 homes destroyed, and more than 20 fishing camps severely damaged. Flooding also displaced 9,000 individuals in Irumu and completely inundated 11 villages in Djugu. Additional floods and landslides are likely to occur throughout eastern DRC amid expected above-average rainfall during the August-to-January rainy season, according to the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET).

More Than 14 Million People Require Food Assistance Through December

Between 14 and 15 million people in the DRC will require urgent food assistance during the October-to-December lean season, mainly due to armed conflict, flooding, and structural underdevelopment,

according to FEWS NET. While needs may decrease slightly during the January-to-February post-harvest period due to increased food availability, many households will remain food insecure due to conflict-related crop losses, reduced areas available for cultivation, high food prices, and seasonal flooding. In conflict-affected provinces such as Ituri, Mai-Ndombe, North Kivu, and South Kivu, most households are likely to continue experiencing widespread Crisis—IPC 3—levels of acute food insecurity through at least May 2025 due to restricted access to farmland, conflict and displacement-related livelihood loss, and loss of livestock to disease and armed actor looting.[1] FEWS NET anticipates that many households experiencing acute food insecurity will reduce meal frequency and portion sizes, as well as cut back on essential expenditures such as health and education, to meet basic food needs. Newly displaced households and those with severely diminished coping capacity from repeated displacement are likely already facing Emergency—IPC 4—outcomes and may increasingly resort to extreme coping mechanisms such as begging or illicit activities in the absence of increased humanitarian assistance, according to FEWS NET.

Despite these challenges, FEWS NET has determined that emergency food assistance—including from USAID/BHA partner the UN World Food Program (WFP)—is mitigating more severe acute food security outcomes among IDPs in Djugu and North Kivu's Masisi and Rutshuru territories—areas with a high concentration of IDPs—by helping recipients meet their minimum food needs through food and cash distributions from humanitarian assistance.

[1] The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) is a multi-partner initiative that developed a standardized scale to classify the severity and magnitude of food insecurity. The IPC scale, which is comparable across countries and time, ranges from Minimal—IPC 1—to Famine— IPC 5—for acute food insecurity

KEY FIGURES

1.3 Million

People reached with food assistance in September by WFP

U.S. GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

USAID/BHA partners continue to provide emergency food assistance to populations at risk of acute food insecurity in the DRC, including host community members, IDPs, and refugees. Nongovernmental organization (NGO) and UN partners are providing cash transfers for food, food vouchers, and in-kind food assistance—including U.S.-sourced commodities—to help households meet their basic food needs. With USAID/BHA and other donor funding, WFP distributed in-kind food and cash assistance to 1.3 million host community members, IDPs, and refugees in September alone, representing the highest monthly reach in 2024. USAID/BHA is the largest contributor to WFP's food assistance programs in the DRC.

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Number of USAID/BHA partners implementing critical nutrition programs in the DRC

The U.S. government (USG) also supports 12 humanitarian agencies to identify and treat acute malnutrition across the DRC. With USAID/BHA and other donor support, WFP provided commodities for the treatment and prevention of acute malnutrition to 360,000 children and pregnant and lactating women in September, on par with August reach. Additionally, USAID/BHA partner the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) screened more than 15,900 children in eastern DRC between January and September, identifying and treating nearly 2,500 children experiencing severe acute malnutrition. To improve food security and nutrition outcomes in the longer term,

USAID/BHA funding supports activities that build the capacity of community health workers and other health personnel to manage and refer cases of acute malnutrition to treatment centers. USAID/BHA partners also conduct outreach activities to promote optimal infant and young child feeding practices along with community-based, prevention-oriented monitoring of nutritional conditions

$26 Million

In dedicated USG support for life-saving health care programming

HEALTH

With USG support, NGO and UN partners are working to augment the availability of essential medicines and medical supplies in the DRC, as well as improve disease surveillance and response efforts and displaced and host populations' access to quality primary health care services and. Partners are also providing training and other capacity-building measures for health workers. USG partners support reproductive health care activities in crisis-affected communities in eastern DRC, as well as health messaging efforts that spread awareness of health and hygiene best practices to prevent communicable diseases transmission.

479,000

People reached by UNICEF with GBV prevention, risk mitigation, or response interventions from January to June 2024

PROTECTION

USG partners support critical protection services, such as gender-based violence (GBV) prevention and response activities, in conflict-affected areas of the DRC while integrating protection considerations into all other USG-supported humanitarian programming. Protection funding enables partners to support child protection and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services, establish safe spaces for children and survivors of GBV, and conduct activities on staff mental health and well-being. UNICEF provided MHPSS and other protection services to approximately 12,300 children across conflict-affected areas of the DRC between January and June 2024, representing a 35 percent increase compared to the number of people reached during the same period in 2023. UNICEF also reached nearly 479,000 people with GBV prevention, response, and risk mitigation interventions—including through women and girls' spaces in IDP camps and mobile services in hard-to-reach areas—during this period.

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Number of USG partners implementing shelter programs in the DRC

SHELTER AND SETTLEMENTS

With USG support, NGO and UN partners facilitate the construction of emergency shelters for displaced individuals and support the coordination and management of IDP and refugee sites in the DRC. USG funding supports the procurement and distribution of in-kind emergency relief-items, including blankets, kitchen sets, and tarps. USG partners also provide longer-term shelter solutions for returnees in more stable areas, paired with legal assistance to help returnee families secure land for farming and habitation in their resettlement areas.

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Number of USAID/BHA partners implementing critical WASH programs in the DRC

WASH

The USG supports NGO and UN partners to implement WASH activities across the DRC. USG-supported activities include distributing hygiene kits and other essential WASH commodities and transporting emergency water reserves to IDP and refugee sites. USG partners also construct and rehabilitate WASH infrastructure—such as handwashing stations, latrines, showers, and water points—and facilitate safe access to existing WASH infrastructure for vulnerable populations.

CONTEXT IN BRIEF

- Since March 2022, renewed clashes between FARDC, M23, and other armed groups in eastern DRC have resulted in civilian casualties, damaged and destroyed infrastructure, and displaced hundreds of thousands of people within North Kivu and to South Kivu, straining humanitarian capacity in areas receiving IDPs. IDPs are facing significant disease and protection risks due to inadequate access to shelter, WASH facilities, and other emergency support, particularly in the outskirts of the city of North Kivu's capital city of Goma, where many people have fled following the escalation of conflict in October 2022 and February 2024. Relief organizations also report severely restricted access to M23-controlled areas of North Kivu and conflict-affected areas of South Kivu, where access to basic services and food is likely limited, hindering response efforts.
- Violence, restricted humanitarian access, poor infrastructure, forced recruitment into armed groups, and reduced access to agricultural land and traditional markets have contributed to the deterioration of humanitarian conditions in several parts of the DRC, triggering widespread internal displacement and refugee outflows.
- On October 23, 2024, U.S. Ambassador Lucy Tamlyn renewed a declaration of humanitarian need for FY 2025 due to ongoing complex emergency conditions in the DRC.

PUBLIC DONATION INFORMATION

- The most effective way people can assist relief efforts is by making cash contributions to humanitarian organizations that are conducting relief operations. A list of humanitarian organizations that are accepting cash donations for disaster responses around the world can be found at interaction.org.
- USAID encourages cash donations because they allow aid professionals to procure the exact items needed, often in the affected region; reduce the burden on scarce resources, such as transportation routes, staff time, and warehouse space; can be transferred very quickly and without transportation costs; support the economy of the disaster-stricken region; and ensure culturally, dietarily, and environmentally appropriate assistance.
- More information can be found at:
  - USAID Center for International Disaster Information: cidi.usaid.gov
  - Information on relief activities of the humanitarian community can be found at reliefweb.int.