

EASTERN DRC SITUATION

May 2026



At the Kavimvira Transit centre in South Kivu, UNHCR and its partners provide health screening and sanitation facilities for people voluntarily returning from Burundi. © UNHCR/May 2026

HIGHLIGHTS

- The Ebola outbreak in eastern DRC is rapidly spreading across 25 health zones in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu provinces, with [808 confirmed cases including 192 deaths](#)¹, including among two internally displaced people in the DRC since 15 May. The outbreak is compounding an already volatile humanitarian situation marked by persistent armed clashes, displacement and constrained humanitarian access.
- Border closures introduced to contain the outbreak have disrupted refugee movements and increased protection risks. The DRC–Rwanda closure temporarily suspended voluntary repatriation to Rwanda, leaving more than 500 Rwandan refugees in transit centres in Goma and Bukavu, while raising risks of movement through informal border points.
- Voluntary returns from Burundi to South Kivu have continued to areas not currently affected by the outbreak, with more than 47,100 self-organized returns and over 4,400 facilitated returns recorded so far this year. UNHCR and partners are supporting arrivals at Kavimvira Transit Centre through health screening, handwashing stations and awareness-raising to reduce public health risks.

¹ The number of reported cases is as of 10 June 2026, even though this External Update covers the month of May.

DRC Updates

- **Ebola prevention and response:** UNHCR is working with local authorities, WHO and other partners to prevent and respond to the outbreak, though current multi-agency response efforts continue to face significant challenges, including gaps in surveillance and contact tracing, limited treatment capacity, and shortages of essential medicines and supplies, while scaling up laboratory capacity remains critical to ensure timely detection and confirmation of cases. UNHCR Regional [Update on the Ebola Virus Disease Outbreak in the DRC and Uganda](#) contains more detailed information on needs and response.
- **Facilitated Returns from Burundi:** Three voluntary repatriation convoys were organized from Burundi to the DRC in May for Congolese refugees in Burundi, with more than 3,000 individuals comprising around 700 households repatriated in safety and dignity to Uvira in South Kivu province.
- **Self-organized returns from Burundi:** return movements continued at the Kavimvira border in South Kivu province, with 678 individuals identified as returnees in May, bringing the cumulative number of self-organized returns to more than 47,100 individuals from 11,600 families as of 31 May.
- **Voluntary repatriation from eastern DRC:** The ninth voluntary repatriation convoy of Rwandan refugees from North Kivu to Rwanda since the beginning of 2026 took place on 7 May, with 356 individuals from 94 families assisted to return to their country of origin in safety and dignity. Since 1 January 2026, a cumulative total of 2,336 individuals from 684 households have been repatriated from North Kivu. In the same period, one convoy supported the voluntary repatriation of 19 Rwandan refugees from six households from Kalehe territory in South Kivu to Rwanda, bringing the cumulative number of Rwandan refugees repatriated from South Kivu since the beginning of the year to 173 individuals, mainly from Bukavu. The exercise has, however, been temporarily suspended following the closure of the DRC–Rwanda border by authorities in May, as part of efforts to contain the spread of Ebola virus disease.
- More than 500 Rwandan refugees remain stranded in transit centres in Goma and Bukavu following this border closure, prolonging uncertainty and challenging living conditions.
- UNHCR is working with WFP to provide additional food assistance to those affected, while advocacy with the Government of Rwanda is ongoing to identify solutions for the safe return of these households. UNHCR also facilitated a WHO visit to the transit centre to strengthen preparedness measures, including expanded quarantine arrangements and contact tracing.
- During May, one convoy of Burundian refugees also took place from South Kivu, with 39 individuals from 10 households voluntarily repatriated to Burundi. As of 30 May, the cumulative number of Burundian refugees repatriated stood at 743 individuals.
- **Registration and documentation:** In May, UNHCR and the CNR distributed 122 refugee identity cards to urban refugees in Goma whose documentation had expired. Refugee identity cards strengthen protection by reducing risks of arrest or detention and by improving access to services.
- **Shelter and essential items:** UNHCR and its partners distributed light shelter kits and non-food item kits to 1,000 internally displaced households in Lemera Health Zone, Langala area, Uvira territory. Conducted with community leaders and the local IDP committee, the distribution provided immediate relief. However, the situation in Lemera requires continued monitoring, particularly regarding transitional shelter, water, sanitation and hygiene needs.

Regional Updates

- **Neighbouring countries also continued to bear the brunt of the crisis in eastern DRC, hosting around 1.3 million Congolese refugees and asylum-seekers as of 31 May 2026, including more than 250,800 people** who fled between January 2025 and May 2026. Burundi and Uganda host the majority of new arrivals, despite ongoing self-organized and facilitated returns from Burundi. Host communities remained overstretched, with already critical gaps in shelter, health, water and sanitation services, worsened by the new Ebola outbreak. UNHCR's [Ebola Preparedness and Response Plan](#) seeks \$14.08 million from July to November 2026 to support preparedness and response activities in the DRC and Uganda which are currently impacted by the outbreak and in Burundi, Rwanda and South Sudan which are among the high risk countries requiring preparedness actions. This UNHCR appeal elaborates on needs outlined in [Africa CDC and WHO's Joint Bundibugyo Ebola Virus Continental Preparedness and Response Plan](#), under the “one plan, one team, one budget” approach.

Country	New arrivals in 2026	Total arrivals since January 2025
Burundi	Registration ongoing	142,157² (109,000 as of March 2026)
Rwanda	2,555	9,704² (as of 31 May 2026)
Tanzania	386	4,329 (as of 31 May 2026)
Uganda	10,519	90,887 (including 63,236 registered as of 31 May 2026)
Zambia	627	3,734 (as of 31 May 2026)
TOTAL	14,087	250,811

Burundi:

- **Facilitated returns:** In May, UNHCR, in collaboration with the Governments of Burundi and the DRC, supported additional facilitated return convoys to the DRC, bringing the total number of returnees to 4,460 since the launch of facilitated voluntary returns on 23 April 2026. The operation continues at a weekly pace of around 1,000 individuals per convoy. The majority of Congolese refugees are however still at the Busuma site, underscoring the need for continued humanitarian assistance and sustained efforts towards durable solutions.
- **Registration:** As of end-May, more than 66,700 Congolese refugees, or about 14,000 households, were hosted at the Busuma site in Ruyigi province. UNHCR and its partners continued providing protection and assistance to refugees relocated to the site, although significant gaps remain across all sectors. Level 2 biometric registration is ongoing and, as of 31 May, more than 46,300 individual refugees in Busuma have been registered, representing around 73 per cent of the site's population.
- **Reception conditions and registration:** In the Cishemere and Makombe transit centres, which host around 4,000 Congolese refugees, living conditions remain dire, with very limited assistance and protection services.
- **Child protection:** UNHCR and its partners provided support to vulnerable children, particularly unaccompanied and separated children, including birth registration, psychosocial support, family tracing and case management. Overall, 1,793 children were safely placed in foster families, 1,097 unaccompanied and separated children received care, and 734 children benefited from education

² The total does not yet reflect recent self-organized returns to the DRC since 23 February 2026 and include Burundian refugees who have returned on their own from DRC to Burundi since 6 December 2025.

² This total includes Rwandan returnees from DRC.

support. Assistance kits were distributed to 230 children, while 188 vulnerable children received hygiene kits. Save the Children International also trained 30 foster parent couples caring for unaccompanied children.

- In May, UNHCR and its partners registered 181 births among refugees at the Busuma site and helped established birth certificates for refugee children, bringing the total number of birth certificates issued at Busuma to 773 as of 31 May. UNHCR, UNICEF and government partners are scaling up efforts to improve access to civil registration services by moving these services closer to health centres and strengthening staff capacity, with the aim of improving access to legal identity for refugee children.
- **Gender-based violence:** UNHCR and its partners provided multi-sectoral support to Survivors of violence against women and girls, including medical care, psychosocial assistance through therapy groups and dignity kits. Prevention was also reinforced through awareness sessions on economic violence, reaching 540 community members.
- Efforts to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse were strengthened at Busuma through the identification of key risks, improved coordination and capacity-building for 37 frontline actors, including police, security personnel and support staff, contributing to a more structured and preventive approach to accountability and refugee protection.
- **Assistance to people with specific needs:** As of 31 May, more than 11,800 refugees, representing 25 per cent of the registered population of 46,300, had been identified as having specific needs, comprising mainly women at risk and female-headed households. 153 individuals with specific needs, including unaccompanied children, received targeted assistance from protection actors, while IRC provided 10 wheelchairs to people with disabilities, underscoring the need for sustained targeted protection and assistance.
- **Health and nutrition:** In May, around 29,000 medical consultations were conducted at the Busuma site for Congolese refugees and host community members. The relatively high number of reported communicable disease cases, including malaria and diarrhoea, highlights persistent links with poor water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) conditions.
- UNHCR and its partners identified over 1,000 new cases of malnutrition, including 934 cases of moderate acute malnutrition and 80 cases of severe acute malnutrition. Among those affected were 780 children under five and 234 pregnant women with moderate acute malnutrition, with appropriate treatment being provided.
- UNHCR and its partners provided 780 mental health consultations and psychosocial support sessions, primarily to women requiring significant and ongoing psychosocial support.
- Persistent gaps continue to affect access to healthcare at the Busuma site. Health facilities face poor sanitation, limited laboratory capacity and insufficient referral options, while the sustainability of services remains uncertain as some partner-supported projects near completion. The ongoing measles outbreak and limited Ebola preparedness, including untrained health staff and an isolation centre not equipped to manage Ebola cases, further heighten public health risks.
- **Water, sanitation and hygiene:** In May, water supply at Busuma reached 437,000 litres per day, increasing from 6.5 to 6.8 litres per person per day, but remained well below humanitarian standards. WASH partners continued developing additional water sources and boreholes, constructing reservoirs and expanding the distribution network. Sanitation gaps remained critical, with around 80 to 83 people

per latrine, limited access to showers and most latrines still temporary; considering only permanent latrines, the ratio rises to one latrine for 232 people.

- **Shelter and infrastructure:** Shelter needs remained far below minimum standards, with only 43 per cent of the population of Congolese refugees accommodated and limited land available to set up additional shelters.
- **Funding and operational constraints:** The Burundi operation continues to face significant funding constraints and operational challenges, severely affecting the delivery of assistance to refugees. Despite these limitations, the operation continues to respond in refugee-hosting areas while supporting voluntary return activities. Increased and flexible donor support is urgently required to sustain life-saving interventions, mitigate protection risks and ensure a safe and dignified response to evolving needs, including the continued facilitation of return movements to the DRC.

Rwanda:

- Rwanda currently hosts around 84,400 refugees and asylum-seekers from the DRC, including 212 new arrivals since January 2026. Of these, 136 are accommodated at Nkamira transit centre, while 76 are residing in Kigali. 2,343 Rwandans have also returned home from the DRC since the beginning of the year.

Tanzania:

- **New arrivals:** From 1-31 May 2026, Tanzania received 56 new arrivals from the DRC, bringing total arrivals since January 2026 to 386 and to 4,329 since renewed violence in eastern DRC in January 2025. New arrivals in May said they were coming from Baraka, Fizi, Goma, Kalemie, and Uvira, and they entered Tanzania through Lake Tanganyika and land routes. This represents almost double the number of arrivals recorded in April, which stood at 29 individuals.
- **Education:** UNHCR and partners supported the administration of the Congolese national examinations in Nyarugusu Camp, including ensuring the operational readiness of examination centres and continued coordination with the DRC and Tanzanian national authorities and partners to ensure the safe and orderly conduct of the examinations for refugee children. The DRC Form 4 first-session examinations commenced on 4 May 2026, with 485 candidates sitting for the exams. This represents approximately 97 per cent of the 502 registered candidates. Tanzania's policy requiring refugee children to follow the Congolese national curriculum while in camps significantly increases the cost and operational complexity of education delivery.
- **Verification exercise for Congolese refugees:** On 29 May 2026, UNHCR and the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs (MoHA) held their first bilateral meeting on the planned verification exercise for Congolese refugees in Nyarugusu Camp, agreeing to commence on 1 July 2026 and to establish a joint MoHA-UNHCR team to lead preparations, including budgeting, resource planning and timeline development.

Uganda:

- **New arrivals and registration:** A total of 3,355 asylum-seekers from the DRC were registered from 1 to 31 May. Between 1 January and 31 May 2026, a cumulative total of 10,519 Congolese asylum-seekers were registered, with the majority originating from North Kivu province. This brings the cumulative number of registered arrivals from the DRC between 1 January 2025 and 31 May 2026 to 63,236. Overall, the cumulative number of Congolese arrivals, including both asylum-seekers and refugees, between 1 January 2025 and 31 May 2026 stands at 90,887, including the registered individuals.

- **Ebola update:** Uganda has so far recorded a cumulative total of [19 confirmed cases](#), comprising 14 cases from the DRC and five Ugandan nationals. Of the 19 confirmed cases, 13 patients remained admitted and under care, while four individuals had recovered and been discharged. The Ministry of Health also reported two deaths, both involving people from the DRC. The Ministry continues to lead the national response and has emphasized that the situation remains under control, while urging the public to remain vigilant, adhere to public health guidance and report suspected cases through designated Ebola hotlines and reporting channels.
- **Border closure and movement restrictions:** In response to the rapidly spreading Ebola outbreak in the DRC and the heightened risk of cross-border transmission, Uganda's National Task Force on Ebola Response, chaired by the Vice President, announced enhanced prevention and surveillance measures on 27 May 2026. The measures significantly restrict movement across the Uganda–DRC border, with entry and exit limited to authorized Ebola response teams, humanitarian personnel, food and cargo transporters and essential security staff, all subject to strict health screening and monitoring protocols.
- The Government has also strengthened surveillance and public health controls at all official points of entry. Authorized travellers are required to undergo health screening, complete locator forms and remain under continuous monitoring in accordance with Ministry of Health guidelines. In addition, all individuals returning from the DRC are required to undertake a mandatory 21-day self-isolation period under the supervision of health and district surveillance teams.
- Schools in border districts will remain open but must strictly adhere to Ministry of Health standard operating procedures. School authorities have been directed to closely monitor learners who have recently returned from the DRC, including daily temperature checks for 21 days. Border districts have also been instructed to designate health facilities to monitor and assess any learners who develop symptoms consistent with Ebola during the observation period.
- **Decongesting reception and transit centres:** Uganda has made progress in decongesting transit and reception centres. Despite these gains, further action remains necessary, and the process is expected to be completed by the end of the second week of June.

[Zambia/ZAMCO:](#)

- **New arrivals in Zambia:** In May, 126 new arrivals from the DRC were registered in Zambia. The majority arrived from North and South Kivu provinces, while one individual arrived from Maniema province. Most were relocated to Meheba Settlement. Since the beginning of 2026, Zambia has registered a cumulative total of 627 new arrivals from the DRC.
- **New arrivals in Malawi:** During the reporting period, 72 individuals from the DRC were registered at Dzaleka Camp in Dowa District, Central Region. Since the beginning of 2026, Malawi has registered a cumulative total of 1,012 new arrivals from the DRC.

Contacts

Lara Schlotterbeck – Head of External Engagement, Regional Bureau for West & Central Africa (schlotte@unhcr.org)

Achu Claris Neh Mokom – Associate Reporting Officer, Regional Bureau for West & Central Africa (achuc@unhcr.org)

For updates on the Eastern [DRC Situation](#), check the country pages of [Burundi](#), the [DRC](#), [Rwanda](#), [Tanzania](#) and [Zambia](#) on the UNHCR Operational Data Portal