

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Humanitarian concerns in North Kivu, South Kivu, and Ituri

OVERVIEW

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has a complex, protracted crisis resulting from a combination of factors, such as conflict, natural hazards, and disease outbreaks. Internal and cross-border displacement, acute food insecurity, acute malnutrition, epidemics, and protection issues affect the population. An estimated 27 million people in the country will need humanitarian assistance in 2022 – an increase of seven million from 2021. An estimated nine million people will need protection in 2022, over six million will need access to WASH, and four million will need shelter (OCHA 17/02/2022).

According to the most recent figures from March 2022, there are 5.97 million IDPs in the country, of which conflict or attacks by armed groups have displaced close to 96% (OCHA 10/05/2022). The areas most affected by conflict and violence are the eastern provinces of North Kivu, South Kivu, and Ituri (RULAC accessed 17/03/2022). These are also the provinces that host the majority of IDPs (an estimated 1.9 million in North Kivu, 1.4 million in South Kivu, and 1.9 million in Ituri) (OCHA 10/05/2022).

There are over 120 active armed groups in eastern DRC (GCRP 01/06/2022). The most active group is the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), mostly in North and South Kivu but also in Ituri (RULAC accessed 18/07/2022). In November 2021, there was a resurgence of the armed group called M23 (officially declared defeated in 2013), with at least ten attacks on army positions attributed to them (Protection Cluster 11/01/2022). Most disputes in North Kivu, South Kivu, and Ituri come from intercommunal conflicts.

Over seven million people in these three provinces are suffering from food insecurity. They are expected to continue experiencing Crisis (IPC Phase 3) food insecurity until September 2022, given a combination of below-normal harvest, attacks by armed groups preventing the population from accessing their fields, and recurrent displacement (FEWS NET 01/03/2022).



Source: VOA (28/02/2021)

Table 1. Overview table for the three provinces

PROVINCE	NORTH KIVU	SOUTH KIVU	ITURI
AS AT DECEMBER 2021			
Population	10,578,590	7,339,415	5,700,000
AS AT 7 MARCH 2022			
People in need	2,500,000	1,200,000	3,000,000
Health	2,100,413	1,688,546	1,368,205
WASH	2,001,478	1,338,337	1,409,969
AS AT 2019			
Malnutrition in children (chronic malnutrition rate)	49.6%	48%	47%
AS AT 30 APRIL 2022			
Refugees	167,965	77,713	13,061
AS AT NOVEMBER 2021			
IDPs	1,844,700	1,225,200	1,777,000
Returnees	1,057,500	540,000	994,800

Sources: OCHA (accessed 20/06/2022); OCHA (27/12/2021); GHI (10/2020); UNHCR (accessed 20/06/2022)

About this report: this report aims to give an overview of the humanitarian situation in the DRC, with an emphasis on the provinces of North Kivu, South Kivu, and Ituri.

Methodology: this report is based on publicly available information on the DRC.

Limitations: the limited geographical coverage of protection monitoring and services has likely led to the underreporting of most figures regarding protection issues (such as sexual and gender-based violence or SGBV cases and the number of child soldiers).

NORTH KIVU

Conflict

The resurgence of and attacks by the M23 have led to increased military presence in Rutshuru territory in North Kivu (RFI 10/11/2021). Clashes between the M23 and military forces in June 2022 led to the M23 taking control of several localities of Rutshuru and Bwisha in Rutshuru territory (ACLEL 30/06/2022). The strengthening of the M23 is likely to cause more displacement in the future. In February 2022, clashes between the military and the M23 had already led to the displacement of 8,000 households in northern Goma (TV5 Monde 15/02/2022). There was also a significant escalation of clashes involving artillery and air strikes between the Uganda People's Defence Force and the ADF in November 2021 (The East African 24/04/2022; FEWS NET 28/02/2022).

Intercommunal violence: in North Kivu, there have been tensions over land tenure between the Nande and Kumu communities since 2018. Land tenure used to be under the customary control of the Kumu. In recent years, violence involving the ADF and other armed groups in the Nord region around Beni has led to more Nande inhabitants moving into the area and buying land, raising tensions between legal state property rights and traditional customary systems (Suluhu 04/05/2021). The tensions have led to sporadic clashes between the two groups, causing displacement (France 24 14/04/2021).

Natural resources: mining in the province of North Kivu is mainly for gold, cassiterite, coltan, diamonds, tourmaline, pyrochlore, and wolfram, among other minerals. Extraction occurs through artisanal mining by groups of diggers (WRM 10/08/2015).

IDPs, refugees, and returnees: 1.9 million people are displaced within the region (32% of the total displaced population in DRC) and there are 1.04 million returnees in North Kivu ((OCHA 10/05/2022; OCHA 27/12/2021). The province also hosts over 167,000 refugees (33% of the total in the DRC) (UNHCR accessed 19/07/2022). In June alone, new armed attacks in Beni displaced 16,000 people. Since April 2022, there have been over 32,000 returnees at the Masisi health zone. These people are in need of food assistance (OCHA 22/06/2022).

Impact

Health: from January–June 2022, there were 792 documented cases of cholera in Masisi territory, mainly in the health zones of Katoyi, Kirotshe, and Masisi – higher than the 212 cases in the same period in 2021. The increase of diseases is linked to the poor provision of drinking water, overcrowding in households (especially in host communities and IDP sites), and poor hygiene and waste management systems (OCHA 22/06/2022).

WASH: people fleeing the violence in North Kivu province are moving to Beni and other areas, where water is becoming scarce as the population grows. The lack of water is putting people at risk of getting cholera and other diseases (ICRC 01/06/2022 and 12/04/2022). Access to water is causing tensions between host communities and displaced families as developed sources cannot meet the demand (ICRC 08/04/2022).

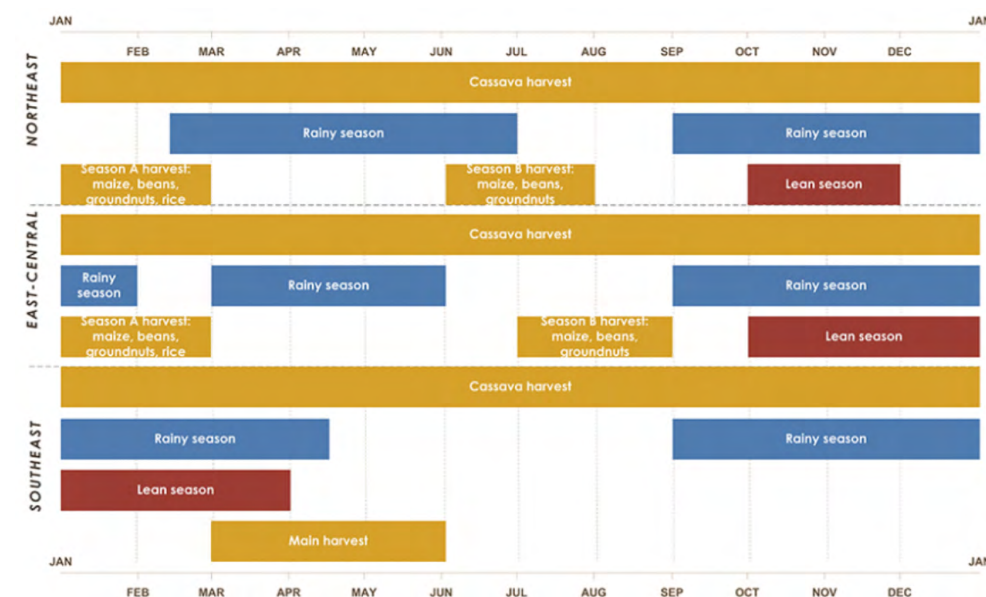
Food security: the northeastern part of the country, where North Kivu is located, has two different harvest seasons: one from January–March and another from June–August (FEWS NET 28/02/2022). North Kivu, South Kivu, and Ituri are among the provinces with the highest number of acutely food-insecure people (IPC 10/11/2021).

Table 2. IPC projections by province (Jan–Jun 2022) – North Kivu

PROVINCE	CRISIS (IPC PHASE 3)	EMERGENCY (IPC PHASE 4)	CRISIS (IPC PHASE 3) AND WORSE
North Kivu	1,534,699	546,384	2,081,084
DRC (total)	20,463,608	5,415,900	25,879,508

Source: IPC (10/11/2021)

Agricultural calendar



Source: FEWS NET (02/2022)

Protection

SGBV: armed groups and security forces use sexual violence as a weapon of war in the DRC (Al Jazeera 14/04/2020). In 2021, 21% (15,954 cases) of all registered SGBV cases in DRC took place in North Kivu (OCHA 27/12/2021). The number of sexual violence incidents attributed to the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Congolese National Police increased in 2017, rising by 28% and 109%, respectively, since 2016 (MADRE 10/2018). Stigma and the limited geographical coverage of protection monitoring and services likely lead to the underreporting of numbers related to SGBV (Protection Cluster 24/04/2019).

Child protection: 55% of the human rights violations and abuses committed against children in conflict-affected provinces recorded through the UN Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism on grave child rights violations were in North Kivu (UNICEF 28/02/2022).

In North Kivu, South Kivu, and Ituri, families encourage young boys to join armed groups or militias in return for the protection of their community. Armed groups also sexually exploit young girls, while other girls join as 'child brides' in hopes of improving their living conditions. Armed groups also kidnap children during attacks on villages, schools, or refugee camps and turn them into child soldiers (GRIP 03/02/2020).

Access

In June, the M23 opened fire on the UN peacekeeping base (MONUSCO) in Shanghi, injuring civilians nearby (ACLEDD 30/06/2022). In North Kivu, particularly in Beni, the increased use of explosive devices in 2021 posed a threat to humanitarian workers and civilians (UNICEF 28/02/2022). In Beni, multiple attacks on the Beni-Kasindi area limit humanitarian access to 10,000 displaced people. Checkpoints by armed groups and movement restrictions by both the Government and armed groups are also frequent in the area, preventing communities from accessing assistance (OCHA 28/02/2022).

Natural hazards: the eastern region of the DRC is at the western fault line of the Great Rift Valley, making it prone to earthquakes and volcanic eruptions (Cordaid 01/2012). There are two active volcanoes in North Kivu: Nyiragongo and Nyamulagira in Goma. In January 2002, the Nyiragongo Volcano eruption destroyed 13% of the city of Goma and killed 200 people (IOM 01/10/2014). In May 2021, the Nyiragongo Volcano erupted again, resulting in the displacement of 450,000 people and the destruction of 2,400 houses. Over 80% of the people affected had returned to their localities or neighbourhoods of by June 2021 (IFRC 06/07/2021).

SOUTH KIVU

Conflict

In June–July 2022, there were clashes in Fizi territory, South Kivu, between Twirwaneho and allied militias on one side and Mayi Mayi Biloze Bishambuke on the other, leaving many people wounded (ACLED 07/07/2022; Mediacongo 30/06/2022). Intercommunal hostilities and tensions involving multiple armed groups were the primary cause of displacement in 2021, mainly affecting populations in the Hauts and Moyens Plateaux of Fizi-Uvira-Mwenga and spreading to the Moyens Plateaux of Fizi and the Ruzizi Plain (UNICEF 28/02/2022).

Intercommunal violence: there are tensions between the Banyamulenge community and the Bafuliiru, Banyindu, and Babembe communities. The Mayi Mayi militia, with fighters from the Bafuliiru, Banyindu, and Babembe communities, is fighting the Banyamulenge community, whose members are viewed as outsiders. In January 2019, increasing tensions led to a new cycle of violence in the province, with lootings, killings, and the burning of villages leading to displacement (Interpeace 08/04/2021; MONUSCO 08/2020).

IDPs, refugees and returnees: there are 1.4 million IDPs, 393,000 returnees, and an estimated 78,000 refugees in South Kivu (OCHA 27/12/2021; OCHA 10/05/2022). Most of these refugees are from Burundi. Between January–June 2022, 1,000 people from Burundi and at least 180 from Rwanda were repatriated from the DRC (Actualité 21/06/2022; Humangle 21/06/2022).

Impact

Health: South Kivu province has already reported over 7,000 cases of measles since January 2022. The majority (over 3,000) of the cases have been in the Fizi health zone (UNICEF 22/06/2022; OCHA 14/06/2022). On 13 June, armed men raided and took essential medicines from a health facility in Baraka, affecting the communities depending on that health centre (OCHA 15/06/2022).

WASH: in South Kivu, only 40–45% of people have access to drinking water (Radio Okapi 22/03/2021). Access is restricted particularly in the city of Bukavu. In the commune of Ibanda, there are several water deficits. Following the lack of drinking water supply from Regideso (the water authority in urban areas), people have started drawing water from Lake Kivu. In Panzi and Irambo neighbourhoods, residents dig and use water from wells on their plots (commonly called bizola) (Mediacongo 28/06/2022).

Food security: the harvest season is between March–June, but the population in South Kivu has been experiencing low yields because of a lack of seeds, soil infertility, diseases affecting cassava in particular, and a lack of tools (FEWS NET 28/02/2022). Poor road conditions, competition from imported foods, and problems that displaced people face in accessing land have also been affecting the commercialisation of products. There are also reports that cattle activities are declining, mainly because of livestock diseases and losses resulting from travel and theft (REACH 09/03/2022).

Table 3. IPC projections by province (Jan–Jun 2022) – South Kivu

PROVINCE	CRISIS (IPC PHASE 3)	EMERGENCY (IPC PHASE 4)	CRISIS (IPC PHASE 3) AND WORSE
South Kivu	1,053,907	127,717	1,181,624
DRC (total)	20,463,608	5,415,900	25,879,508

Source: IPC (10/11/2021)

Protection

SGBV: in 2021, 12% (9,136 cases) of SGBV cases in the country took place in South Kivu (OCHA 24/12/2021).

Child protection: there is little reliable data available on the exact number of child soldiers in the DRC. In 2018, armed groups used an estimated 3,000 children as child soldiers in Tanganyika and South Kivu (UNICEF 12/02/2018).

Access

At least 12 organisations have suspended humanitarian activities in the province because of security and physical constraints resulting from armed clashes in Bijombo and the Ruzizi Plain. The suspension affects over 60,000 people who are in need of assistance, specifically shelter, education, nutrition, protection, and healthcare (OCHA 14/06/2022 and 28/02/2022). Another difficulty is that only 20% of the roads linking the country's provinces are paved (OCHA accessed 17/03/2022). Landslides and flooding during the rainy season in September–May also often cut off roads, particularly in South Kivu (ACTED accessed 19/06/2022).

Natural hazards: in April 2020, flooding in Uvira, South Kivu, affected 80,000 people, including Burundian refugees, and destroyed 15,000 houses (OCHA 09/06/2022; UNHCR 21/04/2020). In 2020, floods in the Uvira and Fizi territories (in South Kivu province) claimed 43 lives, injured over 140 people, and destroyed an estimated 9,979 hectares worth of food crops and market garden crops, affecting around 39,900 farming households (FEWS NET 30/06/2020). The rainy season is expected from September–May.

ITURI

Conflict

Intercommunal violence: in Ituri, the two main ethnic communities – the Hema community, who are mainly herders, and the Lendu community, who are mainly farmers – have been fighting for land access and local power since the 19th century (TNH 03/03/2000). In 2017, there was a resurgence of disputes, leading to attacks between militias associated with the two groups starting in Djugu territory before spreading to the rest of the province. Since then, clashes have been recurrent and have led to the displacement of at least 360,000 people in areas surrounding Djugu territory (ICG 15/07/2020). Attacks on the civilian population and forced displacement also keep increasing in the province. On 8 May 2022, the Lendu-affiliated armed group Coopérative pour le développement du Congo (CODECO) killed at least 38 civilians, including women and children, in Djugu territory (UNSG 09/05/2022). In the first two weeks of June, also in Djugu territory, armed groups killed at least 27 people in villages in the zones of Kilo, Nizi, and Tchomia (OCHA 15/06/2022).

IDPs, refugees, and returnees: Ituri has 1.9 million displaced people and hosts 13,000 refugees (UNHCR accessed 18/07/2022; OCHA 10/05/2022). At the beginning of May 2022, an estimated 19,000 Congolese refugees fleeing violence in Rutshuru, Ituri, sought shelter in neighbouring Uganda (USAID 13/05/2022).

Impact

Health: Ituri is experiencing plague and measles outbreaks. Between 1 January and 5 June 2022, health authorities recorded 280 cases of the plague, including six deaths. In comparison, there were 117 cases and 13 deaths in the same period in 2021. There were also 310 recorded cases of measles between 1 January and 5 June 2022, which is higher than the 146 cases during the same period in 2021 (OCHA 21/06/2022).

Food security: 2.9 million people experienced Crisis (IPC Phase 3) food insecurity in Ituri between September–December 2021.

Table 4. IPC projections by province (Jan–Jun 2022) – Ituri

PROVINCE	CRISIS (IPC PHASE 3)	EMERGENCY (IPC PHASE 4)	CRISIS (IPC PHASE 3) AND WORSE
Ituri	2,290,615	706,363	2,996,978
DRC (total)	20,463,608	5,415,900	25,879,508

Source: IPC (10/11/2021)

Protection

As of February 2022, at least 1.7 million people have protection needs in Ituri (Protection Cluster 21/02/2022). Attacks against IDP sites are common, especially in Djugu territory (UNHCR 13/05/2022; IOM 03/02/2022). On 9 May 2022, armed groups killed 15 people, including children, at the Loda IDP site in Djugu territory. On 1 February, a CODECO attack on the Savo IDP site killed 58 people, including 12 children, and injured 38 others (UNHCR 13/05/2022; UN News 03/02/2022).

The territories of Djugu, Irumu, and Mahagi are the most prone to security crises, given the proximity of attacks to civil society or IDPs (Protection Cluster 21/02/2022).

SGBV: in 2021, 7% (5,405 cases) of SGBV cases in the DRC occurred in Ituri (OCHA 27/12/2021). IDPs are among the most at risk of SGBV. In 2019, half of the SGBV survivors treated in Ituri were IDPs (OHCHR 30/07/2020). IDPs in Ituri, and the DRC in general, are also likely to use negative coping mechanisms, such as survival sex, to meet their basic needs (UNFPA 13/08/2019). SGBV survivors face several obstacles in trying to access care: long distances to health centres, facing extortion and the fear of being attacked again during the journey, poor roads, a lack of money to pay for transport, and a lack of awareness that sexual violence is a medical emergency (MSF 15/07/2021).

Child protection: between January–April 2021, there were 175 grave violations against children, including the forced recruitment of children by armed groups and attacks against schools in the DRC. Most of the cases were in the territories of Djugu and Irumu. 400,000 children in the two territories were out of school as of April 2021 (UNICEF 26/04/2021), and it remains unclear if these have returned to school. Children have been targeted during clashes in the province. On 10 July 2022, the ADF killed five people, including four children (Radio Okapi 10/07/2022).

Access

Armed groups intensified their activities in Ituri during the second half of 2021, making access for humanitarian workers more difficult (UNICEF 28/02/2022). The armed forces had active operations at the start of 2022, especially in Djugu territory, which created further access constraints. Since May 2021, insecurity and violence have suspended humanitarian activities in the Boga health zone in Irumu territory (OCHA 28/02/2022). More than 18,000 displaced people living in the sites of Bahwere, Bembeyi, Mbala, Nyamazazi, and Telega on the Bunia-Katoto route have not received humanitarian aid since July 2021 (OCHA 21/06/2022).

North Kivu and Ituri are the provinces in the DRC where humanitarian workers face the most violence (OCHA 27/12/2021).