

EASTERN DRC SITUATION

9 January 2026



Newly relocated Congolese refugee families at the Busuma (former Bweru) site in Burundi receive medical support from UNHCR and health partners © UNHCR

HIGHLIGHTS

Clashes continued in eastern DRC, including in localities near Uvira, South Kivu Province, where fresh fighting was reported during the first week of January 2026. These attacks further drove internal displacement and heightened protection risks for civilian populations.

- Around 236,000 people have been forcibly displaced from the DRC to neighbouring countries within a year and as of 6 January 2026. Burundi continues to host over half of new arrivals, comprising around 142,000 people, with nearly three quarters of arrivals recorded in December 2025 alone.
- As of 6 January, around 67,900 of the new arrivals in Burundi have been relocated from insecure border locations to the Busuma (formerly named Bweru) site. UNHCR and humanitarian partners are supporting the government response by providing protection services and basic assistance, but critical gaps in lifesaving aid remain.

DRC Update

- In South Kivu Province, fresh fighting, including the use of drones and heavy weapons, was reported on 3 January 2026 near Uvira. Local sources said Kashombe, Lubanda,

Musingwe, Katongo, and Kigongo, located about 10 km (6 miles) from Uvira were amongst the areas affected.

- **The continuing presence of the Congo River Alliance (AFC)/M23 around Uvira, despite their announced withdrawal earlier in December, has contributed to clashes, human rights violations and continuous population movements, exacerbating humanitarian needs.**

Despite on-going humanitarian diplomacy to preserve the humanitarian and civilian nature of refugee sites, Burundian refugees in Baraka and Uvira, faced again this week heightened protection risks from repeated incursions by armed actors into camps.

- **The National Commission for Refugees (CNR) conducted two field visits to Baraka, South Kivu Province, to raise awareness among Burundian refugees** on security measures, including movement restrictions, maintaining a low profile, avoiding involvement in the DRC's internal political affairs, and refraining from joining armed groups.
- **UNHCR has established a daily communication mechanism with refugee leaders** via WhatsApp, enabling incident reporting, community updates, and reassurance through advocacy information. UNHCR has also updated the directory of community leaders to strengthen communication.
- In collaboration with Panzi Foundation, **UNHCR is providing psychological care to four refugees in Baraka who had been abducted by the Wazalendo and later released**, thanks to advocacy efforts led by CNR and local authorities.
- To strengthen child protection, **UNHCR and its partner, ADES, distributed mattresses and sheets to 18 unaccompanied children** in Lusenda camp, and mattresses to 25 children with disabilities.

Voluntary repatriation of refugees from South Kivu remains temporarily suspended due to insecurity, though there is interest amongst refugees, with six new intentions to return expressed by Rwandan refugees on the Nyabibwe-Moyens Plateaux de Kalehe route during the reporting period. As of 6 January 2026, a total of 4,264 voluntary return intentions have been recorded by UNHCR including 3,554 Rwandan refugees from 643 families and 710 Burundian refugees from 187 families), awaiting voluntary repatriation convoys.

Regional Updates

- **With continuing arrivals from the DRC albeit fewer than in previous weeks**, the number of people from eastern DRC seeking safety in neighbouring countries since January 2025 has risen to 236,000, with well over half of these received in Burundi.
- Regular updates on the situation in Burundi are provided through the emergency CORE, available [here](#). In addition communication material on the ongoing emergency in Burundi can also be downloaded from refugee media (Burundi [photo package](#) and [b-roll](#) for media). UNHCR's emergency appeal- requesting US\$47.2 Million over a four-month period covering December to March 2026 is available [here](#).

Country	Total New Arrivals ¹ since 1 Jan
Burundi	142,157 ² (as of 31 December 2025, of whom 101,440 have arrived since 6 December)
Uganda	78,810 (as of 31 December 2025)
Zambia	3,151 (as of 31 December 2025)
Rwanda	7,939 ³ (as of 31 December 2025)
Tanzania	3,943 (as of 31 December 2025)
TOTAL	236,000

Burundi:

- **Burundi continues to host over half new arrivals from the DRC, comprising about 142,000 individuals, with nearly three quarters of them (about 101,400 people),** who fled to Burundi in December alone.
- **As of 6 January, 66,913 Congolese refugees have been relocated to the Busuma (former name Bweru) site** in Ruyigi commune, Buhumuza Province in eastern Burundi. 61,025 people (12,157 households) have already been registered, including 5,211 new registrations on 5 January alone, placing immense strain on basic services.
- **Children make up 61 per cent of the relocated population, creating high pressure on child protection, education, and nutrition services.** This includes around 37,280 school-age children, with 6,901 newly registered school-age children in the past three days, highlighting the gap in education infrastructure. Current learning spaces and teaching capacity are far below needs, risking long-term educational disruption for thousands.
- Between 3 and 5 January, **646 Congolese refugee children at risk were identified at the Busuma site**, including 30 separated children and eight child-headed households. Protection actors are conducting assessments, but safe spaces for interviews and follow-up remain insufficient, limiting effective case management.
- **UNHCR and its partners provided various water sanitation and hygiene services** at the Busuma site, including 10 water bladders with a combined capacity of around 170,000 litres installed, to ensure access to safe water for refugees.
- **UNHCR and other humanitarian partners provided sanitation facilities including 69 latrine blocks** with 710 doors and 20 mobile latrines, complemented by 14 solid waste pits to maintain hygiene standards. Additionally, 34 shower blocks are under construction to improve personal hygiene. Yet, the rapid population increase continues to outpace infrastructure delivery, raising risks of further disease outbreaks and underscoring the need for sustained funding.

Cholera remains a major concern, with 256 cumulative cases recorded since the start of the influx. The Burundian Ministry of Health is working with humanitarian actors to respond to the outbreak. There are three active cases as of 6 January 2026.

¹ 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 needs.

² This includes Burundian refugees who have spontaneously returned from DRC to Burundi since 6 December

³ This figure also comprises 6,047 Rwandan refugee returnees who have been supported to return from DRC to Rwanda.

- Health facilities at Busuma site recorded 489 consultations in one day, with respiratory infections and diarrhoea dominating cases. 32 malnutrition cases and eight mental health consultations point to **growing vulnerabilities beyond communicable diseases**.
- **To improve shelter conditions, UNHCR and its partners set up 3,106 family tents**, 48 hangars (37 completed) and 34 refugee housing units (RHUs), and 48 hangars (37 completed). However, thousands remain without adequate shelter, exposing families to harsh conditions.
- **Cash assistance for 25,000 refugees to cover immediate needs is ongoing at the site**, alongside the distribution of essential items and fortified flour.

Rwanda:

- **As of 31 December, 7,939 people have arrived in Rwanda from the DRC**. Out of 32 individuals who initially expressed interest in seeking asylum in Rwanda, nine changed their minds and went back to Kamanyola. The remaining 23 were transported to the Nkamira Transit Centre where there are other asylum-seekers. In addition, of 41 new arrivals who had previously identified as Rwandans and had expressed interest in staying, 16 rather returned to Kamanyola. Currently, 25 individuals are hosted in the Nyarushishi Transit Centre, waiting for the government's decision to relocate them to their intended return locations in Rwanda.

Tanzania:

- **Relatively smaller population movements from the DRC to Tanzania have persisted**, with 27 arrivals during the first week of January 2026. These asylum-seekers reportedly came from Fizi and Uvira in eastern DRC, crossing into Tanzania via land routes.
- The arrival trend remains very low, with two days during the reporting period recording zero arrivals. **Total arrivals from the DRC in 2025 reached 3,943 individuals, a sharp increase compared to fewer than 400 in 2024**, highlighting ongoing displacement dynamics.

Uganda:

- During the reporting period, **270 Congolese reportedly arrived in Uganda, with Kisoro continuing to receive the largest share of new arrivals, although arrivals decreased by 61 per cent compared to the previous two weeks (687)**.
- **Around 619 refugees from the DRC were registered**, indicating a 17 per cent increase from 530 registered individuals the previous two weeks. This increase in registration was rather driven by higher admissions at Bubukwanga, Kagoma, and Matanda, indicating that refugees are using different entry points even though total movements into Uganda have not increased.
- Overall, there has been no significant or sustained rise in cross-border mobility from the DRC into Uganda. **Between January and December 2025, 78,810 individuals have fled from the DRC to Uganda, including 73,586 Congolese refugees** registered by the Government.

Zambia:

- **As of 31 December, Zambia has received 3,151 new arrivals from the DRC** including 192 individuals who reportedly fled from the South Kivu, Tanganyika and other provinces. The majority of new arrivals entered through Mpulungu Town in Mpulungu District, Northern Province (149 individuals) at the southern tip of Lake Tanganyika. A further 33 individuals entered

through Nakonde Town in Muchinga Province, on the border with Tanzania, while 10 individuals crossed through various other border points.

- **Among the new arrivals, 170 individuals were registered in Meheba Refugee Settlement,** 92 people in Mantapala Refugee Settlement, one individual in Mayukwayukwa Refugee Settlement, one individual in Lusaka, and five individuals were registered in Lusaka but are based in other locations.
- **A joint verification mission by UNHCR and Zambian government authorities and relevant services to Kilwa and Chisenge Islands in Nchelenge District on 30 December, found that contrary to earlier reports from the Department of National Registration, Passport and Citizenship (DNRPC) indicating a possible presence of Congolese asylum-seekers on the islands, linked to a reported population increase from an estimated 5,000 to 18,000 in recent years, no asylum-seekers have been received on the island in 2025, particularly within the past three months.** Interviews conducted on Kilwa Island indicated that most Congolese residents are self-settled, residing on the island for various reasons, including intermarriage with Zambians. Movements of inhabitants of those islands are regular and seasonal.

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