

# Democratic Republic of the Congo – Complex Emergency

DECEMBER 28, 2023

## SITUATION AT A GLANCE



- FARDC, FARDC-aligned armed groups, and M23 agreed upon a 72-hour ceasefire on December 11, which parties extended on December 14 through December 28, international media reports. Despite improved humanitarian access, severe needs persist across eastern DRC.
- ADF armed group attacks against civilians in North Kivu Province’s Beni Territory continued in November, exacerbating food insecurity and hindering humanitarian operations.
- USAID/BHA partner UNICEF continued GBV prevention community outreach in October, increasing its reach by 130 percent compared to September.



<b>TOTAL U.S. GOVERNMENT HUMANITARIAN FUNDING</b>	USAID/BHA <sup>1</sup>	\$232,395,816
For the DRC Response in FY 2024	State/PRM <sup>2</sup>	\$3,300,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$235,695,816</b>

*For complete funding breakdown with partners, see detailed chart on page 6*

<sup>1</sup> USAID’s Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID/BHA)

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (State/PRM)

## KEY DEVELOPMENTS

### **Two-Week FARDC–M23 Ceasefire Following Heightened Clashes in Eastern DRC Facilitates Initial Returns, Humanitarian Access**

Clashes between the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC), FARDC-aligned armed groups, and the March 23 Movement (M23) armed group in North Kivu Province—primarily Masisi and Rutshuru territories—largely halted on December 11 following the announcement of a three-day ceasefire facilitated by the U.S. Government (USG), international media reports. The ceasefire, which the parties extended on December 14 through December 28, received support from the governments of the DRC (GoDRC) and Rwanda. The ceasefire followed near-constant clashes between M23 and other armed groups in North Kivu since October 1, which contributed to deteriorating humanitarian conditions and pauses in humanitarian assistance in affected areas. M23-related violence in Masisi and Rutshuru displaced at least 500,000 people between October and early December, significantly increasing humanitarian needs, risks of protection violations, and pressure on limited services in communities hosting internally displaced persons (IDPs), according to the UN. In neighboring Ituri Province, one of the destinations for IDPs from North Kivu, protection actors recorded more than 3,200 incidents in November, a 12 percent increase in reported protection abuses—including abduction, forced labor, and gender-based violence (GBV)—compared to October, with most incidents occurring as individuals fled clashes. Furthermore, armed group activity regularly blocked main highways in Masisi and Rutshuru from October to November, causing price increases for basic goods and disrupting the flow of essential items, including food and fuel, to populations in North Kivu.

The December 11–28 ceasefire facilitated an overall reduction in the intensity of fighting in North Kivu despite sporadic clashes between M23 and local armed groups, allowing a degree of stability to return to some areas of the province, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The number of displaced individuals returning to areas of origin in North Kivu increased by 19 percent between November 19 and December 15, likely due to the ceasefire, according to IOM. The ceasefire also allowed greater humanitarian movement after several weeks of insecurity-related access challenges; NGOs, including at least one USAID/BHA partner, had previously suspended or reduced operations in Masisi during November, leaving at least 200,000 recently displaced people in need outside of relief actors' reach as of November 24, according to the UN. Despite improved access, significant humanitarian needs—including for food, health care, and shelter—remain across the province as of mid-December, particularly among IDPs in Masisi and Rutshuru who experienced prolonged periods cut off from assistance, relief actors report. Furthermore, the risk of renewed escalation and subsequent displacement—including of recently returned populations—remains high given the expiration of the initial ceasefire extension on December 28.

### **Insecurity Along Routes Hinders Humanitarian Operations in Eastern DRC**

Security incidents continue to threaten the safety of relief workers and affect humanitarian operations, with the UN recording at least 217 security incidents involving humanitarian workers in the DRC between January 1 and November 13. Several of the incidents reported were opportunistic crimes committed along roads. Notably, in Ituri's Djugu Territory, insecurity on the Lopa–Pimbo and Katoto–Drodro axes prompted some humanitarian organizations to suspend the movement of their staff for a two-week period in late October, limiting relief actors' ability to reach the more than 100,000 IDPs sheltering in IDP sites in Djugu's Drodro, Fataki, and Lita towns. Furthermore, armed individuals robbed at least three humanitarian organizations on the Chivanga–Butale axis in South Kivu's Kalehe Territory between November 18 and 20, while two other nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) experienced

armed robberies along South Kivu’s Musisi–Butale and Bulambika–Hombo axes on November 18, according to the UN. Despite the volatile operating environment across eastern DRC, humanitarian workers have maintained their presence in insecure areas and continue to support populations in need with humanitarian assistance. The USG and implementing partners continue to monitor the security situation, and the UN has led advocacy with local authorities to strengthen security to enable unhindered humanitarian access to affected populations—particularly as the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC begins withdrawing from South Kivu in December.

### Increased ADF-Attributed Attacks Exacerbate Food Insecurity in Beni Territory

IPC Status July 2023–December 2023	
Phase 5	0 people in Catastrophe
Phase 4	3,531,289 people in Emergency
Phase 3	21,866,626 people in Crisis
Phase 2	49,740,503 people in Stress
Phase 1	34,456,568 people Minimally Food Insecure

Suspected Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) armed group members conducted attacks against civilians in North Kivu’s Beni Territory in November, increasing exposure to protection violations, exacerbating humanitarian needs, and obstructing relief operations. Concerningly, some areas in Beni have experienced a marked increase in ADF attacks since at least October, likely due to ongoing government-led operations against the group in southern Ituri and North Kivu, according to local media. Recently, suspected ADF elements launched a series of attacks targeting civilians near Beni’s Mamove town, in Oicha Health Zone, between November 21 and 25, resulting in the deaths of at least 25 civilians and the destruction of several houses.

ADF attacks on civilians hinder their access to agricultural fields and livelihood opportunities, adversely affecting the food security situation in Oicha. Prior to the increase in attacks since October, Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) analysis in September projected approximately 20 percent of Beni’s population would experience Crisis—IPC 3—or worse levels of acute food insecurity through December, with the figure likely to increase to 30 percent in January–June 2024 due to economic factors, food

availability, and insecurity.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, increased ADF attacks have limited humanitarian assistance from reaching those in need. In October, civilians frustrated with recent ADF incursions burned two trucks and a container carrying food for distribution belonging to USAID/BHA partner the UN World Food Program (WFP), forcing WFP to halt its assistance for more than a month. Civil society leaders have also expressed concern that resurgent ADF violence and resultant declining humanitarian conditions in recent months is discouraging return movements to Oicha, which had increased prior to the resurgence of violence in October, local media reports.

### Flooding in Haut-Uele, South Kivu, and Tshopo in November and December Contributes to Increased Humanitarian Needs

Heavy rains and subsequent flooding generated heightened humanitarian needs in Haut-Uele, South Kivu and Tshopo provinces in November and December. Torrential rains in mid-November resulted in three rivers overflowing, leading to flooding in several localities across Haut-Uele’s Dungu and South Kivu’s Fizi territories. The flooding resulted in the deaths of at least four people and injury to 20 others, as well as the destruction of several health care facilities, disrupting health services for more than 5,000

<sup>3</sup> | 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.

people and increasing the risk of cholera transmission, according to the UN. Moreover, the floods damaged more than 1,400 houses, leaving at least 11,300 people without shelter. Most displaced individuals are residing with host community members, straining already scarce resources, the UN reports as of November 21. WFP continues to report challenges with food distribution and the transportation of essential resources to populations residing in health zones in South Kivu’s Fizi, Kalehe, and Mwenga territories, where relief efforts have reduced due to heavy rains.

Additionally, flooding across eight health zones in central Tshopo affected approximately 70,000 people and damaged nearly 7,100 houses between November 20 and 27, according to local government authorities. Most affected households were hosting IDPs who fled intercommunal violence elsewhere in the province; flooding exacerbated existing multi-sector vulnerabilities of host communities and IDPs, including heightened risk of disease transmission due to degraded water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) infrastructure, according to relief actors. In early December, heavy rain and subsequent flooding in Tshopo’s Isangi Territory affected another estimated 21,000 people. The floods damaged or destroyed agricultural fields and residences, as well as infrastructure, including three roads and nearly 2,400 latrines, according to local media.

## KEY FIGURES



**4.6 Million**

People reached with food assistance between January and October by WFP



**11**

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

## 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. 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 has continued to implement a scaled-up response to food assistance needs in eastern DRC, despite access constraints in late 2023, increasing its reach to an additional 100,000 newly displaced people in North Kivu in November and December due to the M23 crisis escalation. Between December 1 and 19, WFP distributed more than 3,200 metric tons of USAID/BHA-provided wheat to more than 268,000 beneficiaries and provided cash transfers for food to more than 179,000 IDPs and host community members in Ituri, North Kivu, and South Kivu.

USAID/BHA currently supports 11 UN agencies and NGO partners to identify and treat acute malnutrition across the DRC. USAID/BHA partner the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) screened more than 44,000 children ages five years and younger for acute malnutrition during October and referred nearly 7,000 children experiencing severe acute malnutrition for further treatment. To support improved food security and nutrition outcomes in the longer term, USAID/BHA funding supports awareness and outreach activities, which aims to build community health workers and other community members’ capacities to identify, prevent, and refer cases of acute malnutrition. USAID/BHA partners also distribute tools and seeds to bolster household agricultural production.



**1,100**

children ages 0–23 months who received routine vaccinations from UNICEF in October

## HEALTH

NGO and UN partners, with USG support, are working to support the availability of essential medicines and medical supplies, displaced and host populations’ access to quality primary health care services, and disease surveillance and response efforts, while also providing training and other capacity-building measures for health workers and health facilities. USAID/BHA partners support reproductive health care and GBV prevention and response 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 the transmission of communicable diseases. In October, USAID/BHA partner UNICEF supported cholera treatment facilities in 15 health zones in South Kivu by providing medicine and medical equipment, enabling the treatment of more than 500 cases of cholera during the month.



**66,300**

People reached by UNICEF with mental health and psychosocial support services in Ituri, North Kivu, and South Kivu in October

## PROTECTION

USG partners support critical protection services in conflict-affected areas of the DRC, while integrating protection considerations into all other USG humanitarian programming. USAID/BHA provides funding that enables partners to support child protection and psychosocial support services, the establishment of safe spaces for children and survivors of GBV, activities that focus on staff mental health and wellbeing, and community-based efforts to mitigate the risk of violence. During October, UNICEF supported more than 1,200 survivors of GBV with legal, medical, and psychosocial assistance and increased community outreach on GBV prevention, reaching more than 230,000 people across the country—an increase of 130 percent compared to the number of people reached in September.



**14**

Number of USG partners implementing shelter programs in the DRC

## SHELTER AND SETTLEMENTS

With USG funding, 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. USAID/BHA 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. State/PRM partner Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) distributed emergency relief items to 4,600 households, along with 4,600 dignity kits for women, in North Kivu’s Masisi and Sake towns in November, following renewed violence in the region.



**11**

Provinces in which USAID/BHA partners are implementing WASH programs

## WASH

The USG funds 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. In October, UNICEF enabled access to safe drinking water for more than 191,000 people in crisis zones in Ituri, North Kivu, and South Kivu. The UN partner also reached more than 184,000 people with hygiene promotion activities in Ituri during the month.

## CONTEXT IN BRIEF

- Despite the implementation of a peace agreement in 2003, fighting between forces loyal to the GoDRC and various armed entities, including the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda, M23, Mai Mai elements, and militias affiliated with the Hema and Lendu ethnic groups, continues to contribute to high levels of insecurity and population displacement in eastern DRC.
- 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.
- Since March 2022, renewed clashes between the FARDC, M23, and other armed groups in Rutshuru have 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 and other emergency assistance, particularly in the outskirts of Goma, where many people have fled following the escalation of conflict in October 2022. Relief organizations also report severely restricted access to M23-controlled areas of North Kivu, where access to basic services and food is likely limited.
- On October 12, 2023, U.S. Ambassador Lucy Tamlyn renewed a declaration of humanitarian need for FY 2024 due to ongoing complex emergency conditions in the DRC.

## USG HUMANITARIAN FUNDING FOR THE DRC RESPONSE IN FY 2024<sup>1</sup>

IMPLEMENTING PARTNER	ACTIVITY	LOCATION	AMOUNT
<b>USAID/BHA</b>			
WFP	Food Assistance—U.S. In-Kind Food Aid, Nutrition	Countrywide	\$222,340,218
	Food Assistance—Cash Transfers for Food	Countrywide	\$10,000,000
	Program Support		\$55,598
<b>TOTAL USAID/BHA FUNDING</b>			<b>\$232,395,816</b>
<b>STATE/PRM</b>			
International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)	Agriculture; Economic Recovery and Market Systems; Food Assistance—Cash Transfers for Food, Food Vouchers; Humanitarian Coordination, Information Management, and Assessments; Health;	Countrywide	\$3,300,000

Logistics Support; Multipurpose Cash Assistance;  
Protection; Shelter and Settlements; WASH

<b>TOTAL STATE/PRM FUNDING</b>	<b>\$3,300,000</b>
<b>TOTAL USG HUMANITARIAN FUNDING FOR THE DRC RESPONSE IN FY 2024</b>	<b>\$235,695,816</b>

<sup>1</sup> Year of funding indicates the date of commitment or obligation, not appropriation, of funds. Funding figures reflect publicly announced funding as of December 28, 2023.

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## **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](https://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.org](https://cidi.org)
  - Information on relief activities of the humanitarian community can be found at [reliefweb.int](https://reliefweb.int).

USAID/BHA bulletins appear on the USAID website at [usaid.gov/humanitarian-assistance/where-we-work](https://www.usaid.gov/humanitarian-assistance/where-we-work)