

## Alert note

DRC Conflict, 20.02.2024

**Date completed: 20 February 2024****Completed by:**

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**Forums:**

DRC

Uganda

Tanzania

**Type of emergency:** Conflict**Funding Survey**

The forums indicate their plan to launch an appeal, we request **funding members** to please fill out this [survey form](#) which will help the **Emergency Steering Committee** assess the funding environment for this response. Please respond to this survey *within 24 hours of Alert publication*.

**1. The nature of the emergency**

Armed conflict, extra judicial killings by security forces and political violence in DRC has caused massive displacement across the provinces of Ituri, North Kivu, South Kivu and Tanganyika in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is reported that there is visible movement of displaced persons from areas like Shasha, Kiroitse and Sake towards Goma and the Uganda border point of Bunagana. The city of Sake has also been affected by bombs and there have been reports of human rights violations and gender-based violence against women and girls. Children have abandoned their schools; unaccompanied children are also observed in the streets and in the neighborhoods of the city of Goma and its surroundings as well as the city of Minova in South Kivu. The displacement is also caused by rising tensions with neighboring Rwanda on alleged support for militia groups.

In addition, rebels from the ethnic Tutsi-led M23 movement are blocking the two main roads into Goma from the north and the west and preventing essential produce from getting through according to the BBC.

In DRC the internally displaced populations are living in churches, schools, and open spaces while some of the most vulnerable are hosted by family and friends. In Uganda and Tanzania, refugees are settled in already established refugee camps. The use of artillery, drones, and explosives in eastern DRC is killing and injuring civilians and damaging and destroying essential infrastructure (Save the Children). Refugees are also moving into Burundi, Zambia, and Angola.

It is anticipated that the forcefully displaced persons will enter Uganda through the three entry points that is Bunagana in Kisoro districts, Busunga in Bundibunyo district and Sabagoro in Kikuube district all-in south-western Uganda. 2,551 refugees from DRC have been received in Uganda since January 2024 (UgandaRefugees.org/UNHCR).

As of 19th February 2024, there were reportedly about 14,599 Congolese who sought refuge in Tanzania. The asylum seekers arrived in Tanzania via Kigoma and Kasulu borders and out of these a total of 13,442 asylum seekers have already been relocated to Nyarugusu refugee camp to-date (UNHCR).

**2. The impact and scale of the emergency**

This is a large-scale regional emergency which affects DRC, Uganda and Tanzania and is likely to spread to other neighboring countries bordering DRC like Zambia and Angola.

The displaced populations have made several movements of flight from one place to another. During the journey, they have lost what little they had taken with them making them vulnerable.

The recent clashes around Goma have resulted in casualties, destruction of communal shelters, and displacement of over 135,000 people while 200 people are reported to have lost their lives ([Medriva](#)). The escalating use of heavy artillery and shelling in clashes around Goma poses grave threats to civilian and displaced populations, threatening more casualties and the destruction of buildings used as communal shelters, [UNHCR](#) said. The affected continue to flee their homes as the rebel's advance, leaving behind everything including sources of livelihood like livestock and crops with no food and clothes and require shelter ([BBC](#)). According to UN OCHA, the current fighting will continue unless there is cessation of hostilities between the warring parties. The emergency will, if the projected numbers are received, require additional support and resources in order to respond to the affected in a timely and effective manner.

According to UNHCR, reports of bombs falling on civilian areas [in Sake and Goma](#), have raised concerns for their safety where an estimated 65,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) are sheltering in open spaces. Affected persons at the areas of settlement are vulnerable, some are hosted by families while others are camped in churches and schools exposing them to the possibility of an outbreak of diseases, lack of food, safe water and poor or no access to health and education services. In Uganda and Tanzania, DRC refugees are in camps with insufficient humanitarian resources to support their basic needs.

### **Uganda**

Uganda is one of the countries neighbouring DRC that is preferred as a country of asylum for forcefully displaced persons mainly since there are over 500,000 refugees from DRC and has a progressive refugee policy that allows refugees to have freedom of movement, the right to work, own a business and own property, and access to primary and secondary education and health care and other social services. Since 2015, the Government of Uganda has been granting the *prima facie* refugee status to Congolese asylum-seekers on appearing at its borders. The current Uganda Country Refugee Response Plan is severely underfunded and unable to adequately respond to the anticipated influx and provide dignified response to the forcefully displaced persons from DRC. It is imperative that additional funding is provided for the cause. The anticipated spontaneous arrivals in Uganda will have a significant strain on the emergency response infrastructure in Uganda leading to acute lack of humanitarian services.

In the short and long term, the settled Internally displaced will lack basic needs of food, clothing, shelter and have poor or no access to health and education services. In addition, the settlement camps are prone to the spread of different epidemics like cholera or measles according to the BBC.

Some of the roads to Goma and from Goma to the Uganda border are currently blocked stopping the displaced persons from crossing to Uganda. It is however expected that as fighting continues displaced persons will find a safe passage to cross to Uganda.

In the short term, it is expected that there will be high levels of hunger and malnutrition especially affecting young children and pregnant mothers, acute lack of shelters both at the reception centres and in the settlements, lack of core relief items, high demand for Health/WASH services, increased need for psychological first aid and specialized services for new arrivals with extreme mental health conditions, increased demand for basic protection services at the reception/holding centers especially for children, young girls, women, the elderly and persons with disabilities and poor hygiene sanitation services and food security at the reception centres and in the settlements where the asylum seekers will be settled. The expected new influx within refugee settlements (i.e. Nakivale) will further strain the allocation of resources available for both refugee and host community affecting the already fragile balances between the groups.

### **Tanzania**

During initial interviews, asylum seekers indicated fear of being targeted by all armed groups, forced recruitment of young men, and generalized violence, including gender-based, as reasons for fleeing. Since late last year, other individuals sought asylum in Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi. However, Tanzania (14,599) now has the fastest-growing influx in comparison to other asylum countries. (Source UNHCR). Asylum seekers have been travelling from Masisi and Rutshuru territories in North Kivu, rest at Goma, and continue to Tanzania via Bukavu and Uvira. Currently, most of the asylum seekers come from Baraka, Uvira, Fizi, Goma, and Masisi.

As conflict continues to intensify, the region has also been experiencing excessive rain and flooding resulting in over 300 deaths and affecting 1.8 million people, further compounding the vulnerabilities of the population. With limited access to water and sanitation, there were already reports of a cholera outbreak. The potential spread of cholera along the route to Goma and nearby IDP settlements is a serious concern, necessitating urgent containment measures. The influx of displaced individuals into Goma heightens the risk of a cholera outbreak due to strained sanitation facilities. (Source [UNHCR](#)).

### **3. Local and national capacity**

Local capacities (churches, schools, NGOs) are overwhelmed by the number of affected people in need. Reception centres such as churches, schools and host families are trying to provide for the needs of people displaced through community / joint donations. In Uganda and Tanzania, those living in the reception centres and camps are depending on humanitarian needs, but the support is insufficient to support the large number of displaced people.

In **DRC** some humanitarian organizations are trying to support the affected through providing humanitarian support. Since the population of Goma is growing many of the displaced persons coming into Goma and the vicinity areas are settling in open crowded spaces and left to fend for food and water. Some are hosted by relatives and friends who support the displaced to meet their needs for food and shelter. National and international organizations as well as the UN are working to initially seek means of urgent support for displaced people.

In DRC, the IASC System-Wide Scale-Up was activated on 16 June 2023 for North Kivu, South Kivu, and Ituri provinces, with a focus on protection and Gender Based Violence prevention. Initially planned for three months, it was subsequently extended until 31 December 2023. An Operations Center in support of the Scale-up is planned to be established in Goma to host cluster coordinators for all activated clusters supported by information managers for the duration of the scale-up (IASC)

In **Uganda**, affected persons who are fleeing from danger are trying to use their own social networks to support one another. Churches are playing a critical role of providing shelter and food to the affected populations. Adults are taking care of separated and unaccompanied children who have fled.

Emergency response in Uganda is guided by the Uganda Country Refugee Response Plan (UCRRP) which aims at responding to emergency response challenges in a holistic, comprehensive, and integrated manner in order to strengthen Uganda's asylum space, provide lifesaving assistance, improve access to public services, strengthen co-existence and self-reliance, and pursue durable solutions. The Central Government in collaboration with local government structures in districts where refugees are received/hosted takes lead in any emergency response.

In a humanitarian emergency like this one, the Government of Uganda handles critical aspects of the response that includes Refugee Status determination, Registration /documentation, Border security and nationality screening at Collection points to identify new arrivals from recyclers, Civilian character of asylum security screening at the border to identify and separate combatants from civilians for appropriate interventions as well as land allocation to new arrivals. The Government and the host communities have generously welcomed the new arrivals and are doing what they can to help them. However, lack of funding continues to hamper humanitarian assistance. More support is needed from the international community, the private sector, and the government to ensure the refugees has access to protection and assistance.

While in **Tanzania**, asylum seekers are mostly accommodated at the Nyarugusu Refugee Camp, which is close to the border with the DRC. However, officials have also documented unreported numbers entering across open borders. Currently, there is only one reception centre operating in Kigoma region where asylum seekers are kept upon their arrival before relocated to the camp. UNHCR and partners are working closely to ensure asylum seekers are reallocated to Nyarugusu camp without delaying them at the reception centre.

Local structures and resources are playing an important role in providing support to the affected population. There are some response from the local leaders, community-based structures, and Refugee Welfare Committees (RWCs). These and other grassroots entities are actively engaging in assisting and facilitating the response, leveraging their community ties and local knowledge to address the challenges posed by the emergency.

UNHCR in Tanzania works with partners to provide assistance as follows:

- Medical Teams International (MTI) has set up a tent in MoHA office and is undertaking a medical screening of all the new arrivals and referring those in need at hospitals in the town.
- Psychological First Aid (PFA) and counselling will be done as some arriving may have experienced traumatic events.

Danish Refugee Council has deployed staff for child protection and for case management to identify GBV cases while UNHCR staff are working on identifying vulnerable groups including lactating mothers, unaccompanied elderly, chronically ill, just to mention a few and supported them with medical services including PEP. Norwegian Refugee Council has erected temporary shelters and worked on improving WASH facilities at MoHA office and reception center (NMC ground) in Kigoma. African Initiatives for Relief and Development is deploying buses and trucks for movement

The Refugees Act 1998 has a provision for the grant of prima facie refugee status. UNHCR advocates for prima facie status to be granted in respect to this caseload.

#### **4. Key needs and gaps**

##### **DRC**

In DRC, according to the report published by DTM-IOM, statistics show 1,473,128 people were displaced before February 5 to 8, 2024 and this number includes 847,360 women, 625,762 men and 236,13 children under 5 years old. (DTM -IOM, February 2024). According to IOM, displaced families fleeing violence and atrocities in North Kivu province require urgent assistance, including food, shelter, water, hygiene, and sanitation (IOM).

The members of DRC Forum is organizing to conduct a joint needs assessment to collate more detailed information on the conflict situation and the situation of the displaced persons (and to identify their needs).

##### **Uganda**

In Uganda, if the anticipated influx happens and the projected number of people arrive in Uganda, there will be critical gaps in the humanitarian space where support will be most needs including:

- **WASH Assistance Gaps** inadequate water supply, poor hygiene and sanitation practices, and lack of solid water management practices/facilities are identified as major WASH needs both at reception centers and settlements where new arrivals are being relocated.
- **Reception centres management gaps:** reception centers in Nyakabande, Kabazana, Sebagoro and Bubukwanga lack the capacity to accommodate the projected numbers. For instance, Nyakabande transit centre in Kisoro district where majority of new arrivals are expected to be received has capacity of accommodating 7,200 people but in 2022, we had over 20,000 asylum seekers from DRC in the centre. Therefore, there is need to increase the capacity of reception centres by putting additional overnight shelters and other relevant facilities such as latrines, water supply, health facilities and hot meals service points.
- **Protection assistance gaps:** the anticipated proportion of vulnerable populations especially women and children will be high (usually over 60% of the population). There is anticipated high numbers of GBV cases, many separated and unaccompanied children, high numbers of persons in need of mental health and psychosocial services and high numbers of persons with specific needs (PSNs) and extremely vulnerable individuals (EVI's).
- **Lack of basic domestic items (Core Relief Items & other Non-food items);** Affected persons fleeing from conflict situations arrive at the reception centres with nothing but the clothes on their backs.
- **Shelters Construction for Extremely Vulnerable Individuals;** Affected persons with extreme vulnerabilities are unable to construct shelters for themselves and they are living in undignified environments.
- **Emergency livelihood gaps:** Displacement deprives individuals of their means of livelihoods and assets. Among the displaced persons, we shall inevitably have vulnerable individuals that need to be mapped and supported with interventions such as multipurpose and cash for work emergency livelihoods, there will be able bodied individuals that can be identified to provide labour and are paid under cash-for-work arrangements and there will be skilled individuals that can be supported to start-up income generating activities right from the time they are allocated plots of land. This emergency livelihood assistances would have significant positive contribution in settling new arrivals who lost their livelihoods due to the conflict.

**Tanzania**

Based on various communication and meetings with UNHCR and other partners, UNHCR is appealing for more support from partners and international communities to be able to provide the required support to this crisis. The most pressing needs are mentioned to be;

- ✓ Food
- ✓ Health care
- ✓ Psychosocial support
- ✓ Coral Relief Items (CRIs) such as blankets, sleeping mats, mosquito nets, cooking sets etc.
- ✓ WASH Support whereby;

**Water**

- Need for standby pumps and generators.
- Water taps (these for replacing of older/damaged taps) in the existing network.
- Water network extension
- Need for general water storage tanks, preferably OXFAM tanks sized 70m3 to 90m3

**Sanitation**

- Construction of latrines, repair of latrines, installation of hand washing facilities
- Provision of soaps for bathing, hand washing and washing of clothes
- Dignity kits for women menstrual hygiene
- Water storage facilities at household level

**Hygiene Promotion**

- Need for provision of hygiene education; in line with provision of dignity kits, environment cleaning, latrine cleaning kits etc).
- Facilitation of incentive workers for carrying out hygiene promotion.

Please indicate whether you are considering:

	Indicate your intention with an <b>X</b> below
Rapid Response Fund	
Three Country-specific Appeals (individual forum appeals)	<b>X</b>

**5. Forum Capacity and members intention to respond**

**DRC**

Capacity details of forum members with the intention to respond are given below. In the priority of crises defined by the members of the Forum, the problem of armed conflict made the first pages of the EPRP. With the current situation, all members are preparing to intervene once the means to respond effectively to the crisis have been put in place.

**Uganda**

**LWF** is very capable with wealth of experience and has gained reputation among humanitarian partners (UN Agencies, Government of Uganda and the community) playing significant role in refugee operation in Uganda. LWF UNHCR multisector Implementing Partner (IP) in Uganda for more than three decades including the recent ongoing partnership since 2012 both for South Sudanese and Congolese refugee response. Currently LWF has operational presence in Rwamwanja, Kyangwali and Nakivale settlements where this proposed emergency response would take place.

**FCA** continues to provide education in emergency situations with integration of child protection, psychosocial support and gender equality.

**HEKS/EPER (Swiss Church Aid)** supports marginalized communities through humanitarian, social justice, human rights and economic initiatives in livelihood, agroecology, conflict sensitivity and water and sanitation. HEKS/EPER already implements livelihood/cash interventions in Nakivale refugee settlement collaboration with UNHCR and OPM.

**Church of Uganda** is a national member of the alliance with experience in humanitarian response. It has played a significant role in leading forum response through RRF as well as response to South Sudanese response in the aspect of livelihoods and peaceful co-existence. It has a country wide presence with strong ability to mobilize communities through its structures. The structures have also played a crucial role in providing first line response for shelter through schools and Churches.

ACT Member	Geographical focus	Sectors of expertise and experience	Estimated budget range
<b>ACT DRC Forum</b>			
ECC, BOAD, EELCo and Christian Aid (members working in South and North Kivu)	North and South Kivu	WASH, Food and Non-Food items, Food Security, Livelihoods, Shelter among others	Approximately USD 300,000 each.
<b>ACT Uganda Forum</b>			
Lutheran World Federation (LWF)	Kisoro Nakivale Kyangwali Rwamwnja	Protection MHPSS support WASH Shelter NFI support	250,000 USD
Finn Church Aid (FCA)	Kisoro, Nakivale, Kyangwali, Rwamwanja	Education	150,000 USD
HEKS- EPER (Swiss Church Aid)	Nakivale, Oruchinga	Emergency Livelihoods, multipurpose cash and cash for work	150,000 USD
Church of Uganda (COU)	Kisoro, Nakivale, Kyangwali, Rwamwanja	Peace-building and Community Mobilization	100,000 USD
<b>ACT Tanzania Forum</b>			
TCRS	Kasulu district in Kigoma region	WASH, Nonfood items and Psychosocial support	450,000 USD

## 6. Potential responses

**ACT DRC** members namely BOAD, EELCO, ECC (national members) and Salvation Army CAID, NCA, EPER SUISSE and DKH (international members) all operate in the affected areas namely North and South Kivu. The DRC ACT Forum members have the capacity to respond in various sectors including cash, shelter, WASH, livelihoods among others and plan to have a joint response to this crisis. There is a need for financial assistance to enable them to respond to the gaps identified.

### ACT Uganda

Four forum members will respond in the following thematic response areas;

- LWF – Protection, MHPSS, WASH, NFI, Shelter and Livelihoods
- Finn Church Aid – Education
- HEKS - Emergency Livelihoods including multipurpose cash and cash for work
- Church of Uganda – Peace building and community mobilization

### ACT Tanzania

TCRS operates in the affected region and has experience in responding to emergencies and disasters by providing relief services such as food and non-food items, WASH, and psychosocial support to affected communities since its establishment in 1964 up to-date. On the side of refugees, TCRS assisted the government and UNHCR in humanitarian refugee relief operations who fled from neighbouring countries since 1964 to 2019. Under this Appeal alert, TCRS aims to support some WASH interventions and its related WASH NFIs such as detergents soap, environmental cleaning kits, dignity kits etc.

Under psychosocial support, TCRS will work through the interfaith approach to provide pastoral care and psychosocial support to the victims. The interfaith Committees comprises of religious leaders from Christian, and Muslim.

Initially, through ACT Alliance Tanzania forum, TCRS already provided 66,645 pcs clothes for men, women and children to UNHCR as his first-hand support. TCRS also provided lifesaving support in the last quarter of 2023 from ACT Alliance RRF of over 4,533 plastic buckets, 4,533 jerry cans, and 3,672 health kits and also

constructed 180 family latrines. It also assisted facilitation of 68 incentive workers to provide hygiene promotion to the new influx. As part of their healing process, TCRS also assisted psychosocial support (counselling) to over 11,273 women and men refugees.

In this Appeal, TCRS is interested to continue providing support in areas of WASH, NFIs and would also like to provide a helping hand in the area of psychosocial support. According to UNHCR, the set target population for this year is 35,000 refugees which we are also looking into them benefiting from these planned interventions.