



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO COUNTRY REPORT

THE STATE OF THE HUMANITARIAN
SYSTEM 2026

ACRONYMS

AFC/ M23	Alliance Fleuve Congo/Mouvement du 23 mars (River Congo Alliance/Movement of 23 March)
COHP	Coordination Opérationnelle Humanitaire Provinciale (Provincial Humanitarian Operational Coordination)
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
FARDC	Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo)
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
IDP	internally displaced persons
INGO	international non-governmental organisation
NNGO	national non-governmental organisation
PSEA	prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse
SOHS	The State of the Humanitarian System
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This country report for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) provides an evidence-based overview of the current international humanitarian system between 2022 and 2025 to supplement the global analysis in [The State of the Humanitarian System 2026 \(SOHS\)](#). It describes the country's humanitarian context and responses to ongoing crises; outlines the size, shape and performance of the humanitarian system; and highlights key findings from primary research in North and South Kivu, supplemented with secondary data including scholarly and grey literature. The country report offers a comprehensive picture of how the international humanitarian system, alongside other actors, operates in DRC and it assesses the system's effectiveness in meeting the needs of people affected by conflict and crises.

Our research indicates a mixed picture of the state of the humanitarian system in DRC, with several important challenges. Improvements include better delivery of aid in line with internationally recognised standards in more accessible areas, as well as greater preparedness and capacity among skilled staff to respond to the needs of populations affected by crisis. Humanitarian actors are also increasingly adapting their operational approaches to better support community needs. However, several structural challenges continue to hinder the effectiveness of the humanitarian system in DRC. The system remains heavily dominated by United Nations (UN) agencies and international organisations, who control funding, resources and agenda-setting processes, often to the detriment of local and national actors, as well as people affected by crisis. Other challenges include access, ensuring accountability to affected people, and widespread sexual abuse and exploitation.

The power imbalance between international and local actors – with international actors holding a near-monopoly over decision-making power – combined with limited government engagement, creates an environment in which humanitarian actors operate with excessive autonomy and a laissez-faire, hands-off approach. This situation is further reinforced by a lack of transparency, weak accountability mechanisms, political influence and insufficient action to address other forms of misconduct. There remains limited progress on localisation, and practices such as gatekeeping continue to negatively affect adherence to humanitarian principles. In this context, some aid workers exploit these systemic weaknesses to engage in corrupt practices, diversion of humanitarian assistance and other forms of misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse and other practices that undermine the dignity of aid recipients.

Corruption and aid diversion take many forms and represent some of the most critical setbacks in the humanitarian system in eastern DRC. They are both structural and systemic, sometimes involving well-organised networks and actors who are supposed to prevent and combat these excesses. Together, these challenges undermine the effectiveness of humanitarian interventions and erode the sector's overall credibility and trustworthiness.

Organisations have adapted through local partnerships and by modifying modalities, but assistance has not met needs. Prioritisation has focused narrowly on survival, leaving critical sectors such as protection and psychosocial support underserved.

At the household level, aid has been inconsistent and poorly adapted to prolonged displacement, with uneven targeting and the exclusion of vulnerable groups. Consequently, trust has declined, resource competition has increased and social tensions have grown.

Recommendations

Decision-makers, humanitarian stakeholders and practitioners need to promote good practices of humanitarian assistance. This includes:

- developing mechanisms that promote transparency and social accountability in all steps of assistance, including verification mechanisms that specifically target local chiefs and aid camps in coordination with aid frontline staff
- promoting protection and dignity, including preventing and combating sexual exploitation and abuse
- working to shift decision-making power to national and local humanitarian actors, as well as para-humanitarian stakeholders
- proactive preparedness for epidemics and outbreaks
- prioritising services in collaboration with local communities, where replacement funds cannot be secured.

