



Democratic Republic of the Congo



Quick facts

Number of IDPs	1,900,000
Percentage of total population	2.9%
Start of current displacement situation	1996
Peak number of IDPs (Year)	3,400,000 (2003)
New displacement	1,000,000

As of December 2009, 1.9 million people were displaced by the various conflicts which have killed several million people since the mid-1990s and continue to affect the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Over a million people were displaced in 2009 alone, the majority of them in North Kivu Province, and the level of displacement was at the end of the year the highest since 2004. At the same time, an estimated million people or more returned home, half of them in North Kivu.

The new displacement in 2009 was caused by fighting between militia groups and Congolese armed forces supported by the UN, as well as by attacks and violence against civilians by all sides. Following an improvement in relations between the Congolese and Rwandan governments in early 2009, the countries jointly led operations against the Hutu Democratic Liberation Forces of Rwanda (FDLR) in North Kivu. After the end of the joint operations, the Congolese army launched in North and South Kivu operation "Kimia II" against the FDLR, with logistical support from MONUC, the UN peacekeeping mission in DRC. The army also clashed with Mai Mai militias, and the FDLR and Mai Mai groups both made widespread attacks in reprisal against civilian communities. By the end of the year, an estimated 990,000 people were displaced in North Kivu, and 690,000 in South Kivu.

Attacks against the population by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Lower Uele and Upper Uele Districts, and by local militias in Ituri District, also led to the displacement of several hundred thousand people in 2009, bringing the number of IDPs in Orientale Province to 450,000 in December. In addition, over 140,000 people fled inter-communal clashes in Equateur Province at the end of 2009, which were reportedly fuelled by demobilised militia members. At least 35,000 people were displaced in other parts of the Province, while over 100,000 sought refuge in the Republic of Congo.

The killing and rape of IDPs and other civilians continued at a horrifying rate in eastern DRC in 2009, and the protection of IDPs and other civilians in eastern DRC has remained of great concern. The government's troops are ill-equipped, poorly trained, and barely paid. Both government forces and rebel groups have attacked civilians, to defeat historic enemies and

also to secure territory in order to benefit from the extraction of natural resources. Many IDPs have had their possessions looted as well.

Women and children have remained at great risk of sexual violence, and according to UNFPA, some 8,300 women were reported to have been raped in the Kivus in 2009. Militia groups have also abducted children to fight. People from ethnic groups who find themselves in a minority in their displacement area are particularly vulnerable.

Most IDPs live with host communities, where they are either supporting themselves or relying entirely on the limited resources of their hosts, as humanitarian access has been severely limited by the fighting. In North Kivu, thousands of people have sought shelter in camps.

The vast majority of IDPs and returnees have lacked access to basic infrastructure such as health centres, schools and roads, clean water, food, seeds, tools, clothes and materials to build houses. The conflict has also caused the disruption of education for many children.

Return has not always been durable, as the reduction of food rations in camps and the need to start up the new planting season were major factors in return rather than the improvement of security. Many people returned home to then find their land occupied. Renewed clashes in return areas also forced people to flee again soon after their arrival home.

The government has made the Ministry for Solidarity and Humanitarian Affairs responsible for the situation of IDPs, but it has had no impact and there has been no legislation to support their protection. MONUC, the largest UN peacekeeping mission in the world with 20,000 troops, has been strongly criticised by international NGOs for its seemingly unconditional support to the army's operations, and the lack of clear rules of engagement to protect civilians. The cluster approach was introduced in 2006, but humanitarian agencies and local NGOs have struggled to respond to the emergency needs of IDPs and other vulnerable people in a context of ongoing military operations and increased attacks against humanitarian workers.

DRC has ratified the Great Lakes Pact and in 2009 signed the Kampala Convention.