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Expert analysis | 23 September 2024

M23 conflict caused nearly 3 out of every 4 displacements in the DRC this year

In the first half of this year, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) experienced 2,741,000 internal displacements due to conflict and violence, the highest figure recorded for a six-month period since IDMC started its monitoring of the country in 2009. A new analysis of our data reveals that the conflict involving the March 23 non-state armed group caused more than 2 million, 73 per cent, of those displacements.



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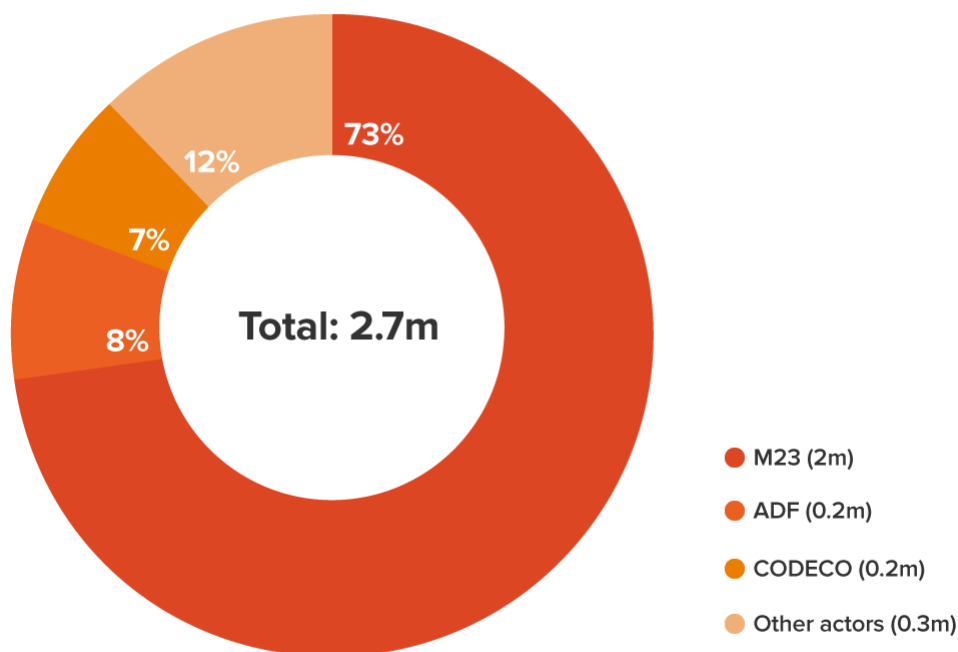
In the country's eastern provinces, where clashes between the Congolese armed forces (FARDC) and various armed groups have escalated since January, civilians are bearing the brunt of the multiple ongoing conflicts.

With growing displacement and insufficient humanitarian funding, a comprehensive assessment of the latest displacement dynamics is necessary to better support internally displaced people (IDPs). Understanding which conflict displaces most people and where those displacements take place can help humanitarian organizations in the DRC allocate aid more efficiently.

2,404,000 displacements caused by three conflicts in half a year

Three Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs) and corresponding conflicts [have caused the vast majority of internal displacements](#) in the DRC in 2024: The March 23 Movement (M23), the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and the Coopérative pour le développement du Congo (CODECO). These groups [have fought](#) over control of land and [resources](#) with other armed groups and with government forces and their partners, including the United Nations (UN) stabilisation mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) as well as the Eastern African Community and the Southern African Development Community's regional forces. Combined, the ADF, CODECO, and M23 conflicts caused more than 2.4 million internal displacements between January and June 2024.

The M23 conflict triggered nearly 3/4 of all internal displacements by conflict in the DRC in 2024



© IDMC 2024/Source: IDMC analysis using data from OCHA, IOM DTM, UNHCR, InterSOS, local authorities, USAID, NRC, and the Protection Cluster

Over 2 million internal displacements caused by the M23 conflict

The M23 group is named after the date of the signature of the ceasefire treaty between the government and the National Congress for the Defence of the People (CNDP) on 23 March 2009. It was formed in 2012 and after a short but deadly conflict, became

211,000 internal displacements caused by ADF conflict

The re-emergence and expansion of the M23 since 2021 means that government forces have moved from Ituri and northern North Kivu to southern North Kivu, leaving a [security vacuum](#). The [ADF](#) and other armed groups consequently faced less opposition and increased their attacks, triggering further displacement and worsening the humanitarian situation of IDPs.

The ADF was originally formed in 1996 in Uganda but eventually settled in the DRC. It is [reportedly](#) linked to the Islamic State (ISIS). The NSAG is active in Ituri's southern territories and in North Kivu's northern territories. North Kivu's Beni and Lubero territories as well as the city of Beni have reported displacements because of the activities of both the M23 and the ADF, [limiting](#) the number of safe destinations for vulnerable people to flee to.

IDMC recorded 211,000 internal displacements caused by the conflict involving the ADF between January and June 2024. While this might seem low compared to the M23 conflict, the ADF conflict alone would rank as the 7th largest conflict-related displacement crisis in 2024 globally.

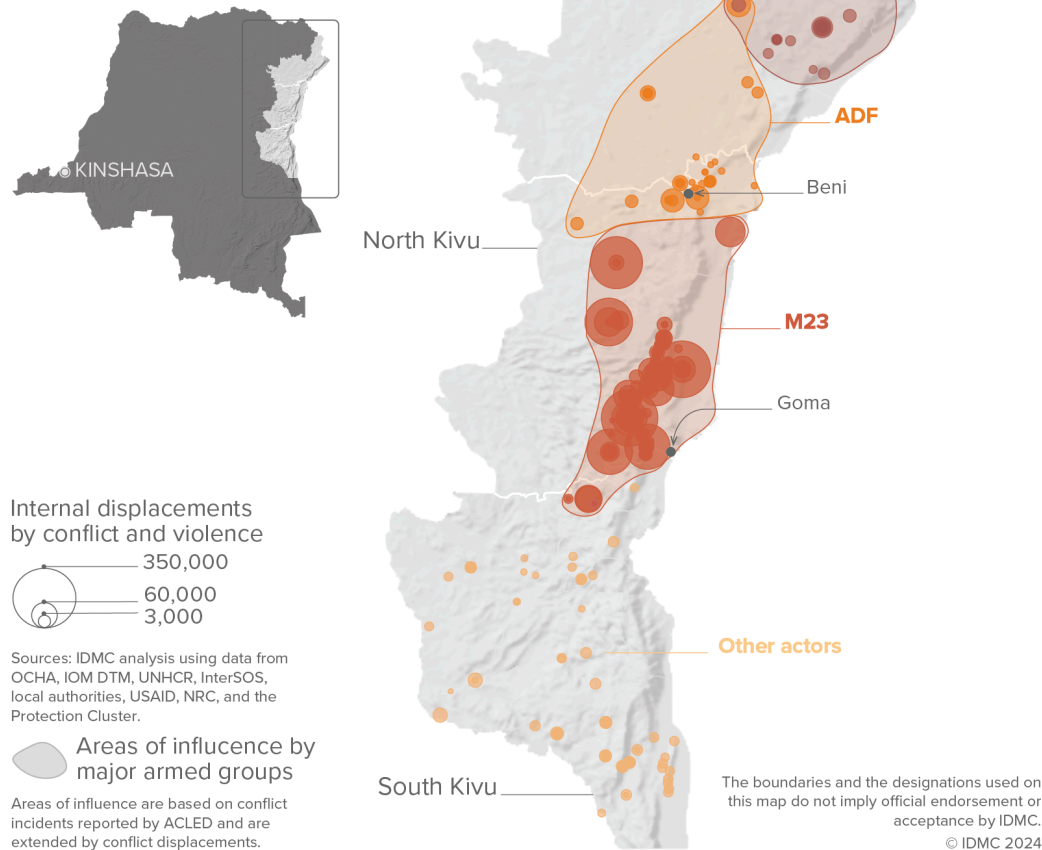
181,000 internal displacements caused by CODECO conflict

Another NSAG that took [advantage](#) of the security vacuum is CODECO, which is active in Ituri's northeastern territories. Originally formed as an agricultural cooperative, CODECO became an armed group in 1999. Since 2021, it has increased its activities and now regularly attacks and pillages mines while fighting both the FARDC and other armed groups. IDMC has reported 181,000 internal displacements caused by the CODECO conflict during the first half of 2024, which would rank as the 9th largest conflict-related displacement crisis in 2024 globally.



2.7 million

internal displacements by conflict and violence
in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu between
January and June 2024



Shifting displacement patterns in a 25-year crisis

For the past eight years, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) has included the DRC on its [list](#) of the world's most neglected displacement crises. Over 25 million people across the country, approximately one-quarter of the population, are facing conflict, violence, and disasters, yet the DRC received only 41 per cent of the required humanitarian funding. The [report](#) emphasizes the lack of needed attention on the situation by the media and international policymakers.

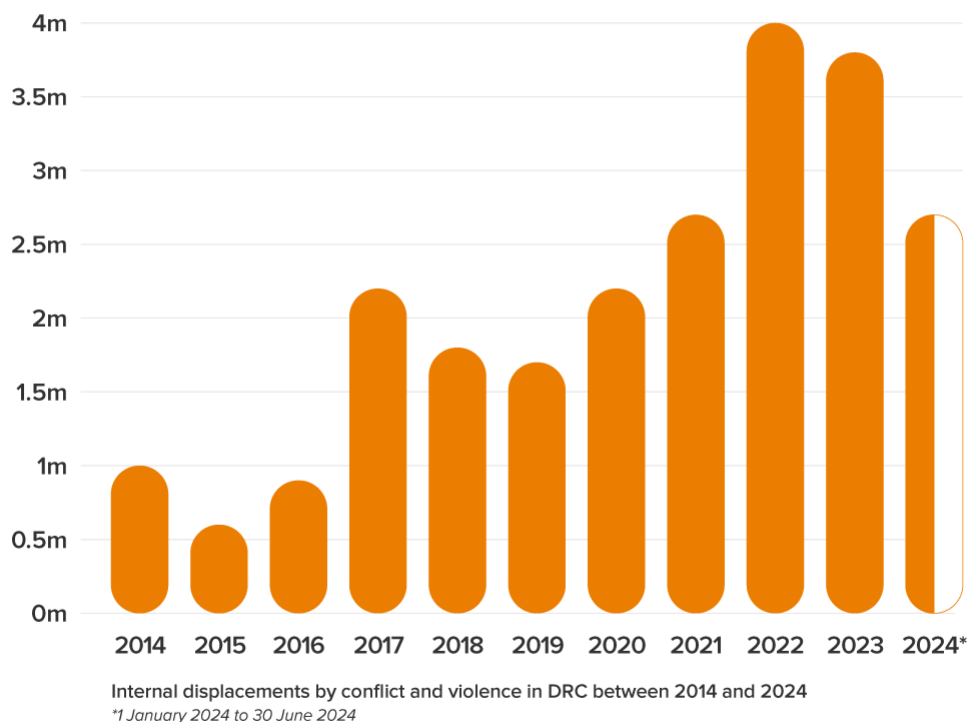
The displacement crisis is protracted, [dating back](#) to the first Congolese war of 1996. While the armed actors involved are shifting regularly, the affected populations are rarely able to recover from the ongoing violence and live in constant fear of displacement. Indeed, at the end of 2023, 6.9 million [people](#) were living in internal displacement in the country.

Most IDPs live in dire conditions with limited access to aid, education, food, healthcare or economic opportunities. While some live in makeshift shelters and camps, most [live](#) in rural areas with host families, straining the already limited resources of host communities. In camps, many IDPs live under extremely harsh conditions and [experience gender-based violence](#) as well as limited access to services such as sanitation and healthcare. Reports of IDPs being [disproportionately affected](#) by Mpox underline how displacement makes people more vulnerable to public health emergencies.

In 2023, IDMC [reported](#) 3,772,000 internal displacements caused by conflict and violence in the DRC, 3,464,000 of which took place in the country's East, composed of the Ituri, North Kivu, South Kivu, and Tanganyika provinces. More than [120 armed groups](#) are active in these four provinces, harming the local population and causing significant displacements.

Conflict displacement has doubled in the past five years

2024 is on course to set a new record



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In fact, these four provinces alone witnessed the [second-most](#) internal displacements triggered by conflict worldwide in 2023, behind Sudan, where a countrywide conflict is ongoing.

The vital need for data

As highlighted by [NRC's neglected crises list](#), the humanitarian response in the DRC, including data collection, is severely underfunded. More frequent, validated, disaggregated and comprehensive assessments on internal displacement, in particular outside the four eastern provinces, can ensure all displaced persons in the DRC are acknowledged and considered for humanitarian assistance. It is also crucial for humanitarian organizations to be informed of the country's conflict dynamics, so that [they can best allocate their limited resources](#) to help the IDPs most in need. IDMC's analysis of displacement by conflict and armed actor can contribute to that

understanding. It can also inform the efforts of policy and peacemakers at the national and regional levels to address the country's various conflicts causing displacement.

UN organizations collecting displacement information, which are principally the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), are also facing significant funding gaps. Many internal displacements go unreported due to the lack of data-collection capacity and are therefore often overlooked by humanitarian organizations in their aid programmes.

While this affects all regions, the province of North Kivu and the area around Goma, where several UN organizations have their country offices, is less affected by this funding gap than the rest of the country, meaning that more displacement figures on the M23 displacement conflict are available than on other displacement triggers – conflict and disasters alike.

Outside of the four Eastern provinces, close to no data on internal displacements is available, neither on conflict nor disasters. Funding for data collection is essential to paint a comprehensive picture of internal displacement at the national scale. Without fully understanding the complex displacement dynamics in the DRC, addressing and resolving internal displacement is even more challenging.

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