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DRC Monitoring Brief

Allied Democratic Forces (ADF)





Introduction

This is the second brief in a series examining factors impacting the aid agency access and safety in the Eastern DRC providing insights for stakeholders in humanitarian aid, food security, health care, education, and community protection in IDP and refugee camps.¹ This brief focuses on patterns of impact of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), following a look at the [M23](#). Future briefs will look at the Coalition of Congolese Democrats, Mai-Mai militia, as well as the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) and the Wazalendo coalition. (Subscribe [here](#)).

The brief is based on Insecurity Insight's [data](#), [social media monitoring](#) and armed actor activity analysis from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data ([ACLED](#)) and is intended to support risk mitigation for humanitarian organisations in the DRC and promote forward looking approaches to maintain access to food, health care, education and protection.²

This second brief focuses on patterns of impact on aid of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF).

Past editions: [M23](#) (March 2025)

Conflict Party in Focus

The Allied Democratic Forces (ADF)



The ADF was formed in the mid-1990s in [Uganda](#) but has been based in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) for most of its existence. Since 2019, the group has been linked to the Islamic State affiliate in Central Africa Province ([ISCAP](#)). The group has been mostly active in Ituri and North Kivu province and has on occasion carried out cross-border attacks into neighbouring Uganda. In response, Ugandan troops were deployed under [Operation Shujaa](#) - a joint military campaign launched in November 2021 in coordination with the Congolese Armed Forces - to combat the ADF in the DRC.

Over the past six year period, ADF linked to highest civilian casualties and impact on aid

If looked at over a six year period, from 2020 and 2025, the ADF was responsible for about a quarter of all reported violence against civilians in the Eastern DRC, making it the non-state armed group most frequently reported to be involved in such violence until M23 expanded activities. ADF attributed incidents involved attacks and killings, linking the [ADF to the highest number of civilian killings](#) among non-state actors.

The ADF has also been linked to 12% of violence against food systems, health care, education, aid operations, including in IDP/refugee settlements.³ Seven killings of aid workers have been attributed to the ADF, making the ADF the most frequently reported named conflict actor attributed to deaths of aid workers longterm. The ADF has also kidnapped health workers and has injured others during attacks on health facilities where the ADF looted medicines from health centres and pharmacies, setting some on fire.

Understanding the patterns of such attacks helps anticipate risks for aid and aid operations operating in an area experiencing such violence or under control of this group, enabling contingency-planning and practical adaptation to evolving threats. It ensures that fundamental services - such as health care and education can continue.

Download the data [here](#).

Less reported ADF violence in the context of rising M23 activities

Reported violence against civilians attributed to the ADF has decreased since its peak in 2022. Between January and April 2025, on average 6 attacks on civilians every month were reported compared with an average of 30 in 2022 when at least 364 incidents were recorded.

Reported armed clashes involving the ADF and other armed actors also decreased starting in 2024. This may be linked to the FARDC redirecting its focus away from the ADF to counteract the M23 insurgency taking place in North and South Kivu. Violence attributed to the ADF has centred north and south of the Ituri-North Kivu border but overall, the location of reported violence shifted further West as the M23 increased its presence.

Conflict Party in Focus

The Allied Democratic Forces (ADF)

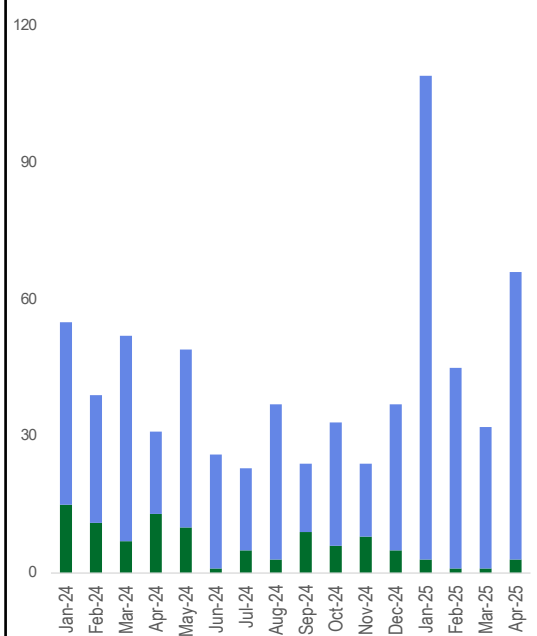


Figure 1: Reported violence attributed to the ADF or the M23 between January 2024 - April 2025.

Since 2024, the number of armed clashes involving the ADF has decreased and generally occurred less frequently compared to clashes involving the M23. Reported violence against civilians attributed to the ADF used to be much more common than reported violence against civilians attributed to the M23. This changed in February 2025 when reported incidents of violence by the ADF continued to fall while violence against civilians attributed to the M23 rose as they continued to expand territorial control in the Kivu provinces.

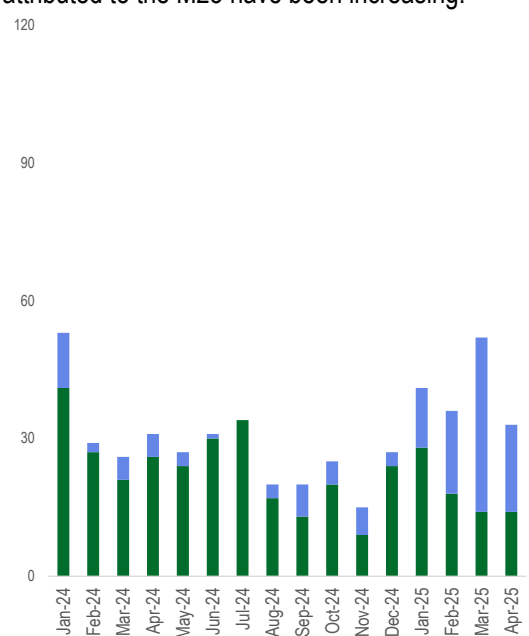
Active fighting involving the ADF or M23, January 2024 - April 2025

In 2024, armed clashes involving the M23 increased, whilst armed clashes involving the ADF decreased.



Violence against civilians attributed to the ADF or M23, January 2024 - April 2025

Since 2024, violence against civilians was more frequently attributed to the ADF, however since 2025 incidents of violence against civilians attributed to the M23 have been increasing.



ADF-related violence affecting food security, health, education and aid operations including violence in IDP or refugee settings

Since 2024, ADF-related violence affecting aid, health care, education, refugee or IDP settlements, and food systems⁴ has declined, with a 36% drop in incidents that year compared to 2023.⁵ This trend appears to have continued into early 2025 when humanitarian access has been difficult and aid operations closed following the USAID stop work orders. Violence against civilians continued to rise in the areas where the ADF is active.

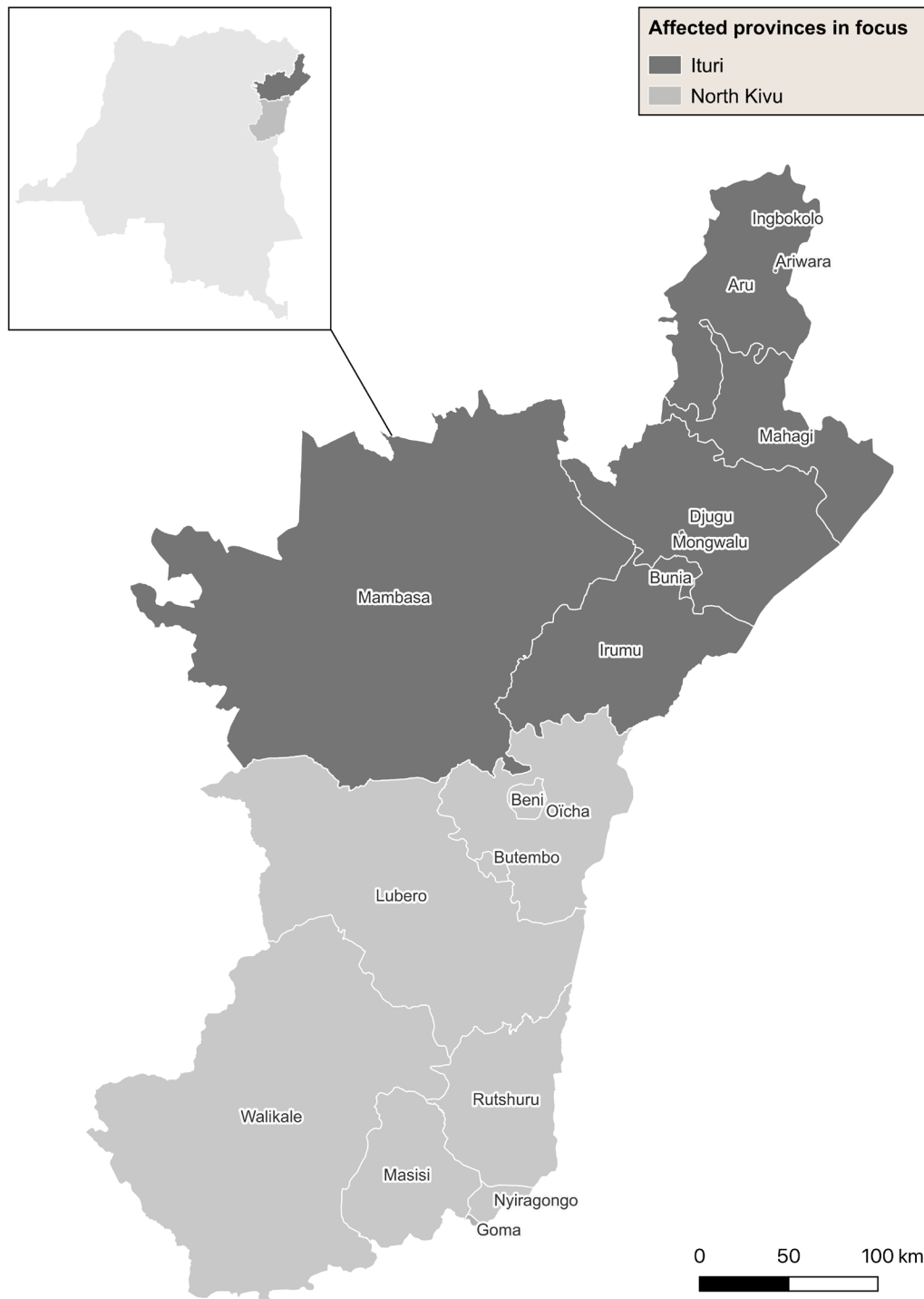
Conflict Party in Focus

The Allied Democratic Forces (ADF)



Figure 2: Ituri, Mongala, North Kivu and Tshopo provinces in the DRC

The impact of ADF violence has been most marked north and south of the Ituri- North Kivu border but has expanded into Mongala and Tshopo as well as other parts of Ituri and North Kivu



Data visualisation: Insecurity Insight. Base map data source: UN OCHA.

Conflict Party in Focus

The Allied Democratic Forces (ADF)



Figure 3: ADF reported activity and impact over time, January 2020-April 2025

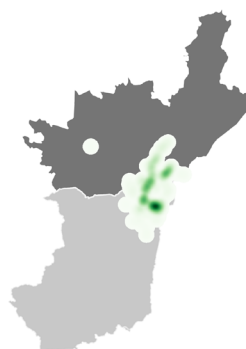
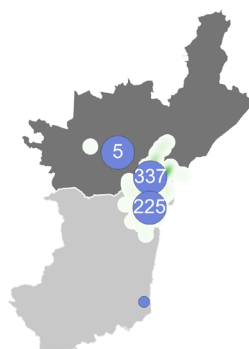
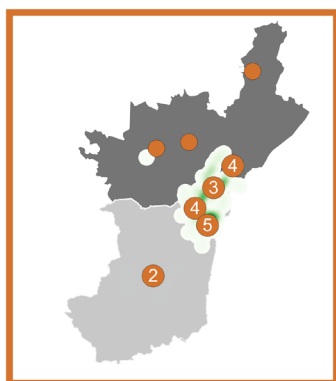
Armed clashes involving the ADF shifted from the border with Uganda further westwards into the DRC from 2020 to 2025

● Violence impacting aid operations (78 incidents)

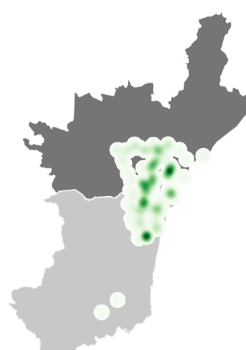
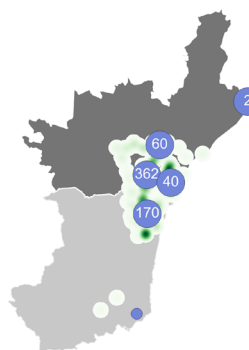
● Violence against civilians (1,563 incidents)

■ Active fighting involving ADF (851 incidents)

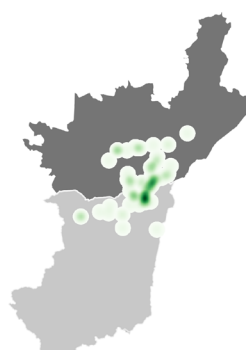
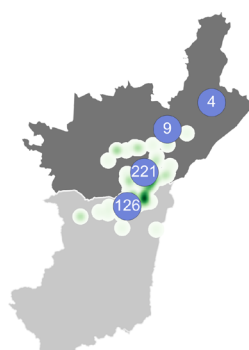
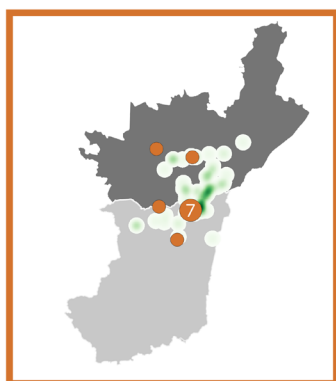
2020-2021



2022-2023



2024-2025



Heat maps: deeper colours indicate higher concentration of incidents.

Point cluster maps: higher numbers indicate higher concentration of incidents within a given area.

Data visualisation: Insecurity Insight. Data sources: Insecurity Insight and ACLED. Base map data source: UN OCHA.



This section reports on the impact of conflict on aid operations, health, food systems and education. It includes all incidents attributed to any conflict party and focuses on incidents recorded in April 2025. It provides a summary of key events, trends and links to further resources.

Developments in April 2025, attributed to all armed actors

Sharp increase on attacks on health care

In April 2025, 47 reported incidents directly impacted aid, health, education and protection programmes. Nearly a third of these incidents impacted health operations (16 incidents) - a sharp increase from the previous month where six incidents were reported. These incidents were primarily due to an increase in looting of health centers in Walikale territory by M23 following their withdrawal from the town at the beginning of the month but also included the murder of a nurse, torture of doctor and raiding of health facilities in Ituri, North and South Kivu. See: [Attacks on Health Care](#) below

An MSF worker was shot and killed, an MSF hospital was entered by armed men who beat two hospital staff, two humanitarian facilities were damaged and an aid worker was killed in his home. See: [Aid in Danger](#)

Farmers were killed, extorted, abducted and restricted access to land by the ADF, CODECO and Mayi Mayi groups. See: [Violence Affecting Food Systems](#)

School facilities were burned and a school principal was shot dead. See: [Education in Danger](#)

A man was shot and killed in Kanyaruchinya Camp. See: [Protection in Danger](#)

Over 100 incidents of rape were recorded in North Kivu, attributed to armed men, including M23 and Wazalendo militia. See: [Reporting Sexual Violence](#)

Download the data [here](#).

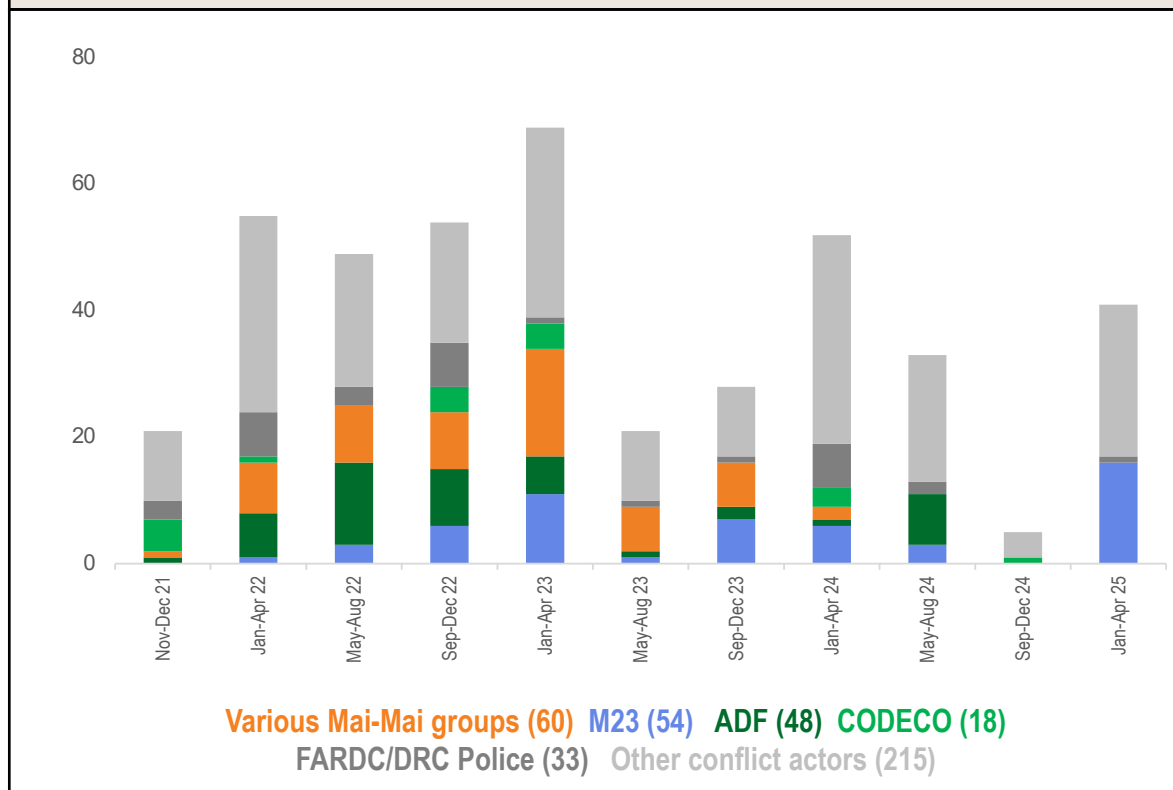
Attacks on Health Care

In the first four months of 2025, at least 41 incidents of violence or obstruction of health care were identified, all in the Kivus and Ituri, a similar pattern to [2024](#). North Kivu accounted for 85% of these incidents, amid escalating conflict as [M23 seized more territory](#), including two major cities. So far, in 2025, the M23 were linked to 39% of the incidents carried out in areas under their control. No incidents of violence against health care attributed to the ADF were reported in 2025 so far.



Figure 4: Reported attacks on health care since the start of the M23 insurgency, November 2021 - April 2025

In the first four months of 2025, at least 41 incidents, 16 of which were attributed to M23, were identified. All these incidents were reported in Ituri, North and South Kivu province.⁷



Health facilities looted following M23 withdrawal

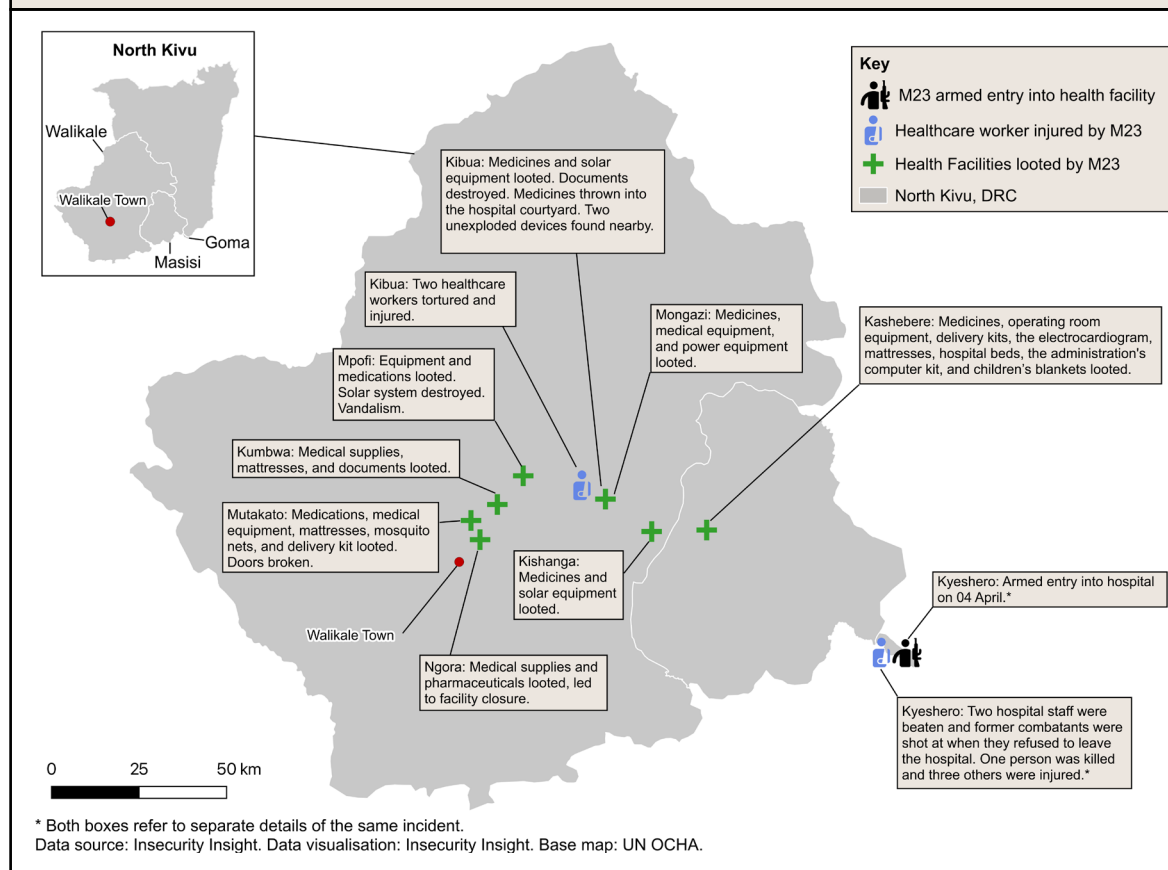
In North Kivu province, health care was affected by violence in Walikale territory, Masisi territory and Goma city. A high number of incidents were recorded in Walikale territory, following the withdrawal of the M23 from the town on 02 April, under a ceasefire agreement. During their withdrawal, they looted eight health facilities, taking medical supplies and medicines, as well as beds, mattresses, batteries and solar panels. At Kibua General Hospital, medical records were destroyed and unused medicines were dumped in the hospital courtyard.⁶

In addition, an unspecified number of private pharmacies were looted of medical supplies, and the Ngora Health Centre was used to treat wounded M23 members, leaving no pharmaceuticals for the local population, causing the facility to close. In Masisi territory, an MSF nurse of the General Referral Hospital was shot in the chest twice and killed in his home by two men on 18th April. The men were reportedly wearing military uniforms and intended to extort the residents' belongings.



Figure 5: Reported incidents of violence against health care by the M23 in Walikale, Masisi and Goma in North Kivu province, April 2024.

During their withdrawal from Walikale town, members of the M23 looted at least seven health facilities, damaging and destroying medical equipment and infrastructure. Additionally, at least three health workers were injured.



Increase in health workers killings

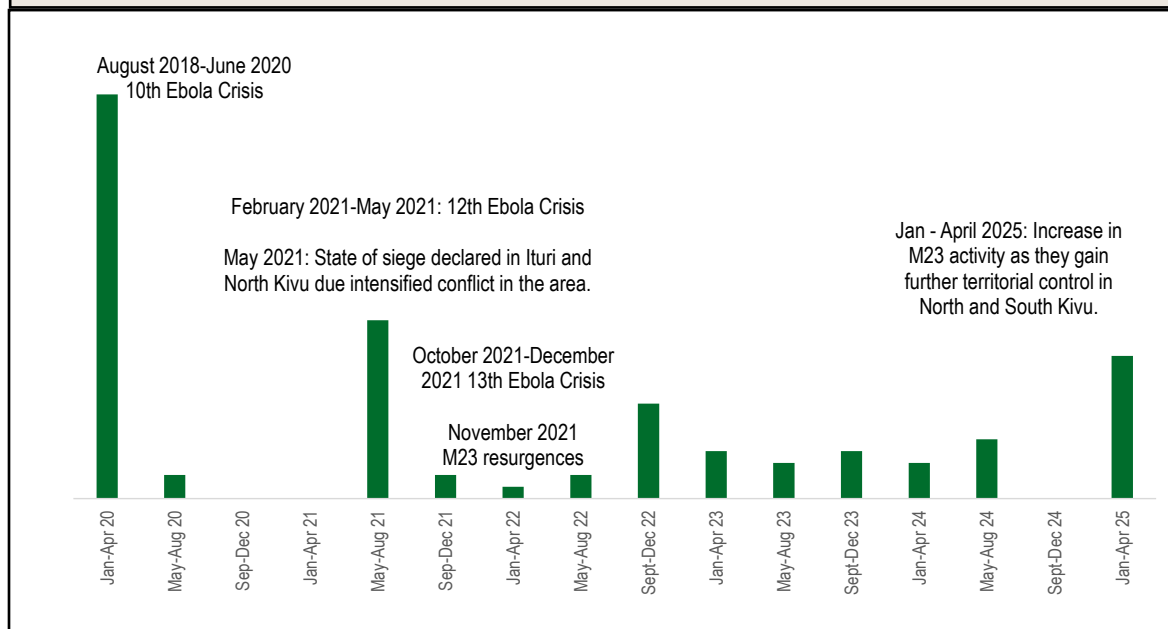
Health worker killings rose from eight in 2024 to 12 between January and April 2025 - the third highest four-month toll since January 2020. Previous spikes occurred in the context of the 10th and 12th Ebola outbreak (January to April 2020 and May to August 2021 respectively) which coincided with a government-declared state of siege in Ituri and North Kivu due to intensified conflict. The M23 resurfaced in North Kivu shortly after, in November 2021.

In 2025, most of these killings were reported in North Kivu, with one in South Kivu where five staff were killed when Kaziba General Hospital was struck by shelling on 09 March. Four patients, including a child, were also killed during clashes between the M23, FARDC and Wazalendo forces.



Figure 6: Reported incidents of health worker killings in the past six years, 2020 - 2025

In the past four years, the number of health workers killed has decreased. However, in the first four months of 2025, there has been a concerning increase of health workers killed.



Further information: Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition (SHCC) DRC report, 2024

In 2024, the SHCC identified 84 incidents of violence against or obstruction of health care in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), of which 77 were recorded in the eastern DRC. In these incidents, health workers were killed, kidnapped and medical supplies looted. Health centers, hospitals and pharmacies were deliberately set on fire in eastern DRC by members from the ADF, CODECO, and Mai-Mai Kata Katanga.

Most incidents affected health care providers working for the government health care system, while 16 incidents affected INGOs and two affected local NGOs. Red Cross societies were impacted in three incidents. From these incidents, health care providers were killed and kidnapped from inside health buildings, whilst traveling in ambulances and whilst providing health care services.

Insecurity in the DRC has severely weakened the health care system, with attacks on facilities causing closures, extreme overcrowding, and critical shortages. The ongoing mpox outbreak, conflict-related displacement, and a surge in sexual violence have overwhelmed services, especially in areas like Goma. Vulnerable groups, particularly women and children in overcrowded camps, face heightened risks from disease outbreaks and lack of access to essential care.

Read the full factsheet in [English](#) and [French](#). Download the [data](#).





Ituri and South Kivu

In Mahagi territory, Ituri, health workers and facilities were affected by a series of attacks by unidentified armed men between 13-15 April 2025. The Nioka Hospital was raided and hospital staff were assaulted on 13 April, prompting the relocation of personnel and the suspension of medical services at the facility. The following day, the Medical Director of the Nioka Referral Health Centre was attacked at his home. Bleha Hospital was then stormed on 15 April and shots were fired inside the facility. A doctor alerted the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC), and a gunfight then ensued between the attackers and FARDC.

In South Kivu, Mukongola General Referral Hospital in Kabare territory was entered by armed individuals on 03 April, causing damage to the maternity ward and pharmaceutical supplies, and injuring one person. In Fizi territory, between 19-23 April, health centres were looted amid fighting, limiting access to healthcare in the area.

Sources: Attacks on Health Care: [16-29 April](#), [11-24 June](#) Download the [data](#).

Direct violence affecting aid agencies

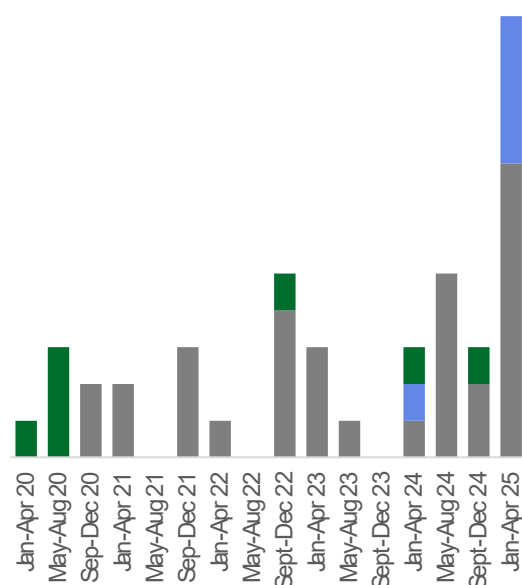
Aid workers killed

Between January 2020 and April 2025, Insecurity Insight recorded at least 44 aid workers killed, all of whom were national staff. Half of the aid workers killed worked with an international (INGO) or UN agency (22 aid workers), 16% (7 aid workers) worked with the Red Cross and a further 11% worked with a local aid initiative (5 aid workers).

Seven aid workers deaths (15%) were attributed to the ADF making them the most frequently named armed actors who have killed aid workers. The ADF linked attacks occurred during assaults on villages or while health NGO staff were providing emergency support to civilians. The M23 was linked to the killing of at least five aid workers (11%), most of which occurred in the first four months of 2025. In at least 16 cases, the affiliation of the perpetrators was not known thus making it possible that more aid worker deaths may be attributed to the group.

Figure 7: Reported number of aid workers killed between January 2020 and April 2025

Between January 2020 and April 2025, at least 44 aid workers were killed by various conflict actors.



Aid workers killed by the ADF: 7

Aid workers killed by M23: 5

Aid Workers killed by other actors: 32



Damage to aid infrastructure

In North Kivu, two aid offices were damaged during clashes between armed factions in Walikale town on 02 April. The same night, the Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)-supported Kyeshero Hospital was entered by the M23 who beat two hospital staff and shot at former combatants who were being treated there. It was unclear if the combatants were from M23 or from other groups. During the attack, one person was killed and three others were injured.

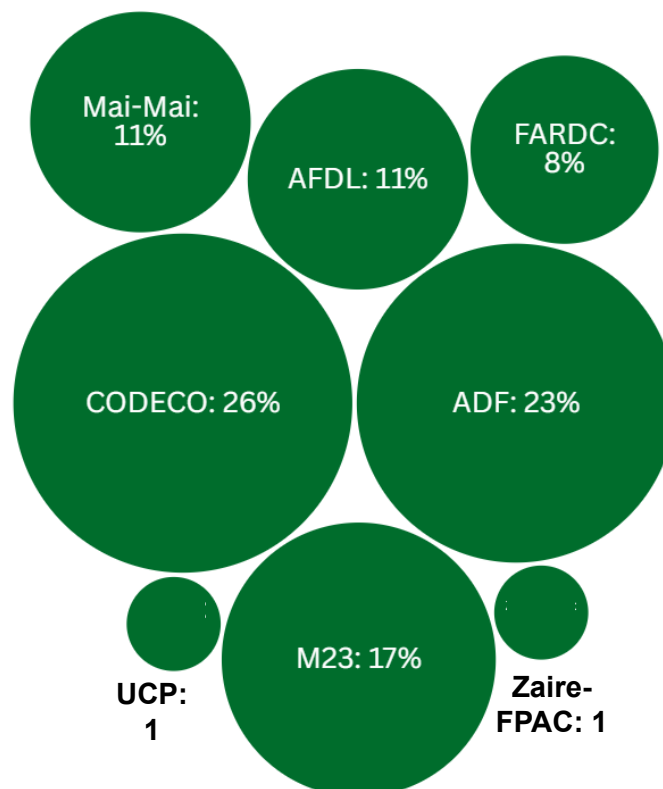
Sources: Aid in Danger: [02-15 April](#); [16-29 April](#) Download the [data](#).

Violence affecting food systems

During the first four months of 2025, at least 76 conflict-related incidents affecting food systems were identified. These incidents included attacks on markets, including on marketgoers, the looting of stored food and the looting or killing or livestock. In half of these incidents, civilians were attacked whilst carrying out a food activity, farmers were killed, kidnapped or injured whilst working their fields whilst others were killed or injured after stepping on and detonating explosive devices. Two-thirds of these incidents were attributed to three armed actors: the ADF (23%), CODECO (26%), and the M23 (9%).

Figure 8: Reported conflict-related incidents affecting food systems, January - April 2025

From 76 incidents affecting food systems between January - April 2025, two-thirds of these incidents were attributed to the ADF, the CODECO and M23.





Affected regions and incidents

In Ituri province, farmers across Mambasa and Irumu territories were killed, extorted, and restricted access to land, due to activities attributed to the ADF and Mayi Mayi groups. The ADF imposed illegal taxes and barriers in Bahaha and Ofai town, as well as multiple villages, demanding money from farmers to access their own fields. Both groups carried out several killings of farmers, including in Tikwabalele, Abulembi, Bandikapau and Matembwe villages. Violence affecting food security was also attributed to CODECO, who abducted a farmer and looted goats during a raid on a village, and killed farmers in Djugu. **Sources:** [7 Sur 7](#), [ACLED](#), [Bunia Actualite](#), [Bunia Actualite II](#), [Bunia Actualite III](#), [Bunia Actualite IV](#), [Radio Okapi](#), [Radio Okapi II](#) and [Voice of Congo](#)

In North Kivu province, violence against food systems occurs particularly in Beni territory, where people working in their fields were attacked and killed, farmers were abducted, their domestic animals were looted, and their property and vehicles were burned by armed men suspected to be ADF. In Goma, a child shepherd and his goats were killed when an IED detonated. **Sources:** [7 Sur 7](#), [Radio Okapi](#) and [Radio Okapi II](#)

In Mai-Ndombe province, people in their fields were abducted by Mobondo militia, who also installed revenue collection points. **Sources:** [Actualite](#) and [Voice of Congo](#)

In Tanganyika province, fishers were forced to hand over their fish to FARDC. **Source:** [Media Congo](#)

Education in Danger

Between January 2020 and April 2025, Insecurity Insight has documented at least 108 incidents of violence affecting education programmes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The majority of these incidents (84%) were reported in the northeastern provinces of Ituri and the Kivus. In these incidents schools were burnt and looted or occupied by conflict actors - depriving thousands of children from accessing education. Additionally, educators were killed or kidnapped and students were attacked inside educational facilities.

Between 2017 and early 2024, Insecurity Insight documented 29 attacks on education attributed to the ADF in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) (25 incidents) and Uganda (4 incidents). These incidents involved killings, abductions, school burnings, and looting. These incidents have had a devastating impact on the education system



Examples of violence affecting education April 2025

In North Kivu province, a school principal was shot dead by unidentified armed men in front of his home in Goma on 19 April. Around the same time, an unexploded IED planted by suspected M23 was discovered in the courtyard of a secondary school in Kibua. A week later, the Bishashata primary school in Walikale was set on fire and destroyed by Maï Maï Kifuafua who also stole 35 sheets of metal intended for the construction of a new school building, as well as school books.

While in South Kivu province, several school facilities were burned amid fighting in Fizi territory.

Source: Education in Danger: [June](#); [April](#) Download the [data](#)

Accountability to affected populations

Displacement in the DRC is no longer viewed merely as a humanitarian emergency, it is increasingly framed as evidence of political failure, ethnic manipulation, and foreign interference. Insecurity Insight's analysis of [1,425 social media comments](#) from February to March 2025 reveals that IDP-related posts often act as catalysts for broader grievances. Anger is directed not just at perpetrators of violence, but at those seen to benefit from displacement, including the aid sector and returning populations.

Displacement was framed through a lens of suspicion and resentment. Social media users accused the government of enabling ethnic engineering, denounced aid as biased or ineffectual. In this environment, aid delivery—even when grounded in humanitarian principles—is viewed with distrust. The looting of a UN warehouse in Goma, for example, was widely defended as legitimate redress for unmet needs.

This perception gap is deepened by narratives that recast displaced populations as invaders and aid workers as collaborators. Inflammatory language, including hate speech and open calls for violence, was targeted at communities perceived to be associated with Rwanda or M23. Though not representative of all public discourse, these comments show how humanitarian issues are increasingly entangled with ethnic and geopolitical grievances, amplifying risk in volatile regions.

Why does this matter for the aid sector? Because in fragile contexts, public perception can dictate operational security. Online narratives—especially those steeped in mistrust and political anger, can justify and even drive violence, and erode community acceptance. When the aid sector action is viewed as partisan, it loses its legitimacy. For aid organisations, engaging with these contested narratives is therefore essential. Understanding how displacement is politicised, and how aid is perceived, is key to shaping conflict-sensitive responses that uphold humanitarian principles while navigating deep-seated grievances.



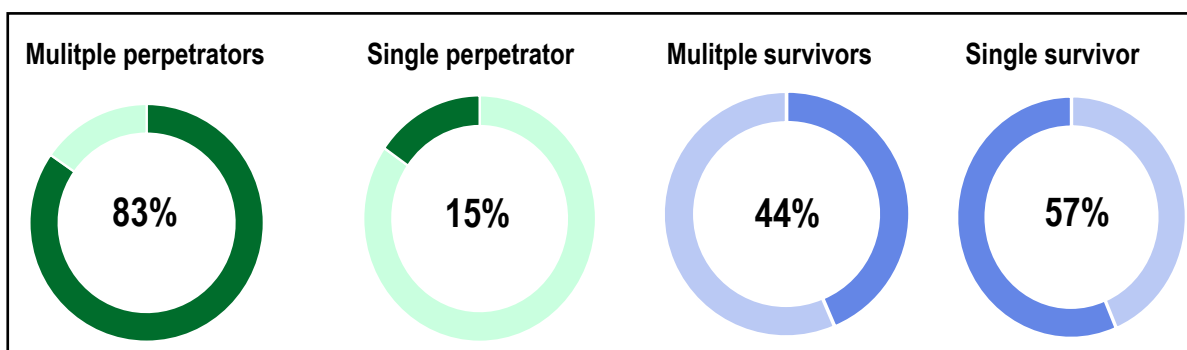
Incidents of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV)

Since 2020, Insecurity Insight has been documenting publicly available incidents of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV). CRSV refers to various forms of sexual violence, including sexual assault, sexual harassment and rape perpetrated by conflict parties in conflict and other situations of violence. Conflict parties are members of state forces, non-state armed groups and paramilitary groups. Membership of a conflict party is usually determined on the basis of visual identification such as uniforms, physical marks on the body (e.g. tattoos, initiation scars) or other markers. Whilst these incidents do not represent the full scope of CRSV in the DRC, they provide valuable insights into the related situational dynamics and perpetrator behaviors. This data contributes to a deeper understanding of how such violence occurs and highlights contributing factors and circumstances that facilitate these acts.

Between 2020 and April 2025, at least 246 incidents of CRSV, Slightly more than a third (78%) of which were attributed to non-state actors, including the ADF, CODECO, the M23, Wazalendo and various Mai-Mai groups. State actors, including FARDC, the South Sudan People's Defence Forces and the Uganda People's Defence forces were also implicated in incidents of CRSV.

82% of all reported CRSV in the DRC involved multiple perpetrators, suggesting that in many instances sexual violence may have been an integral part of group dynamics. Sexual violence carried out by gangs of perpetrators is a common pattern of CRSV. In more than half of reported cases, a single victim/survivor was attacked, while in 44% of incidents multiple victims/survivors were attacked by groups of men.

Download the [data](#).





Effects on aid operations, health care and education: These incidents refer to incidents of violence, threats and obstructions to aid operation, health care and education. It covers the damage and destruction of related infrastructure and the impact on trained staff. These incidents can be the result of unintended effects of a military act, violence against civilians or attacks on civilian infrastructure. Insecurity Insight.

Effects on food systems: These incidents refer to conflict-based incidents which affect food systems, such as food production or food distribution, that may impact food security. They describe the impact that can be the result of unintended effects of a military act, violence against civilians or attacks on civilian infrastructure. Insecurity Insight

Active fighting: Based on ACLED's definition of 'Battles' "violent interactions between two organized armed groups at a particular time and location". These incidents are sub-divided into whether or not these battles resulted in territorial exchanges or not.⁸

Violence against civilians: "Violence events where an organised armed group inflicts violence upon unarmed non-combatants" These incidents also include attempts at inflicting harm or forcibly disappearing and are further sub-divided into types of violences including 'Sexual Violence', 'Attack', and 'Abduction/forced disappearance'⁹.

What do different datasets tell us?

Conflict event data can be classified by the strategic or tactical objectives of conflict parties — such as territorial gains, armed clashes, or the targeting of civilians — as well as by the impact of violence on civilian populations, particularly through the destruction of vital civilian infrastructure.

ACLED datasets offer valuable insights into the strategic objectives of conflict actors by providing incident data showing patterns of tactical behaviour. Insecurity Insight datasets focus on the humanitarian consequences of conflict, providing incident data showing how violence disrupts essential sectors critical to civilian survival, such as health, education, and food security and how protection settings have been affected.

Understanding how the consequences of conflict in the context of tactical moves by conflict parties, can help aid agencies to predict emerging needs caused by the conflict. The data also highlights the foreseeable consequences of civilian harm that conflict parties should take into account — and actively seek to prevent — in their tactical planning as part of their obligations for precaution under IHL



1 This document is part of H2H Network support for the humanitarian response in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

2 Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED). Between January 2020 and April 2025, 6,283 violence against civilians were identified of which 1,563 (25%) were attributed to the ADF. Accessed 01 May 2025.

3 Between January 2020 and April 2025 at least 1,618 incidents of violence against food systems, health care, education, aid operations, including in IDP/refugee settlements and conflict-related sexual violence. The ADF have been attributed to 192 incidents affecting these operations.

4 Data on conflict-related incidents affecting food systems is only available from 2024 onwards.

5 In 2023, Insecurity Insight documented 74 ADF-related violence affecting aid, health care, education, protection and food systems whilst in 2024 47 incidents were documented.

6 Event ID number 96151.

7 Other actors include at least 17 different named conflict actors including the Nduma Defence of Congo (7 incidents), the Patriotic and Integrationist Force of Congo (3 incidents), the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (4 incidents) and the Union of Revolutionaries for the Defense of the Congolese People (5 incidents). In at least 119 incidents the conflict actor was not known.

8 ACLED. (2019). "ACLED Codebook, 2019." Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED). www.acleddata.com

9 *ibid.*

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Insecurity Insight. 2025. Insecurity Insight DRC Monitoring Brief: Spotlight on ADF, August 2025. Switzerland: Insecurity Insight.