Monitoring Brief

Food-related Violence in the North Kivu and Ituri provinces in the DRC

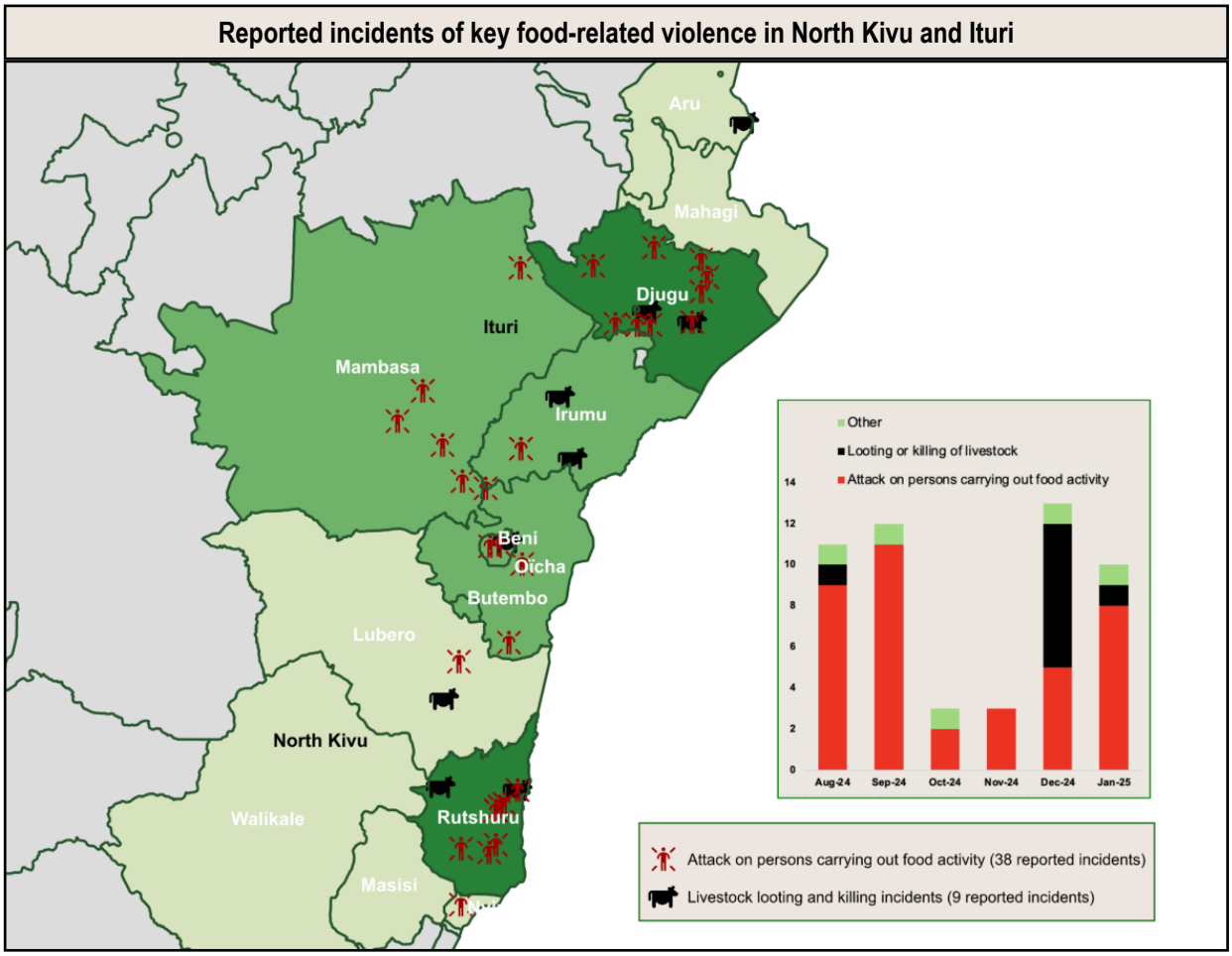
August 2024 - January 2025

Insecurity Insight

MONITORING BRIEF: NORTH KIVU AND ITURI

Main trends

- **Food-related violence** in the forms of attacks against farmers and livestock looting were reported between August 2024 and January 2025 in the eastern DRC provinces of North Kivu and Ituri, with incidents concentrated in the territories of Djugu, Irumu, Beni, and Rutshuru.
- Attacks on civilians engaged in food-related activities—particularly farmers working in their fields—were the most frequently reported type of violence, followed by the looting of livestock.



- A **surge in conflict in December** 2024 contributed to the peak in food-related violence in North Kivu and Ituri. The Rwanda Defence Force (RDF) and M23 resumed direct combat in early December, triggering clashes in Lubero and leading to the capture of Masisi's administrative capital. The breakdown of peace talks mid-month further escalated tensions. Amid this instability, suspected M23 fighters looted over 300 cows and goats in Ngoroba (Rutshuru), while Mai-Mai Wazalendo imposed illegal taxes on farmers in Biakato (Ituri). In February 2025, several IDP camps in and around Goma were forcibly dismantled, displacing thousands under unclear conditions and raising serious concerns about their access to basic services and **humanitarian assistance**. December recorded the highest number of food-related incidents in the period, and by late January 2025, the World Food Programme (WFP) had suspended operations in Goma due to insecurity (though operations partially resumed by March 2025).

- From January to June 2025, North Kivu and Ituri are projected to remain in Integrated Food Security Phase **Classification 3 (Crisis)**. Across the DRC, an estimated 27.7 million people are expected to experience high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above). Of which, approximately 3.9 million people are projected to face critical conditions (Phase 4).

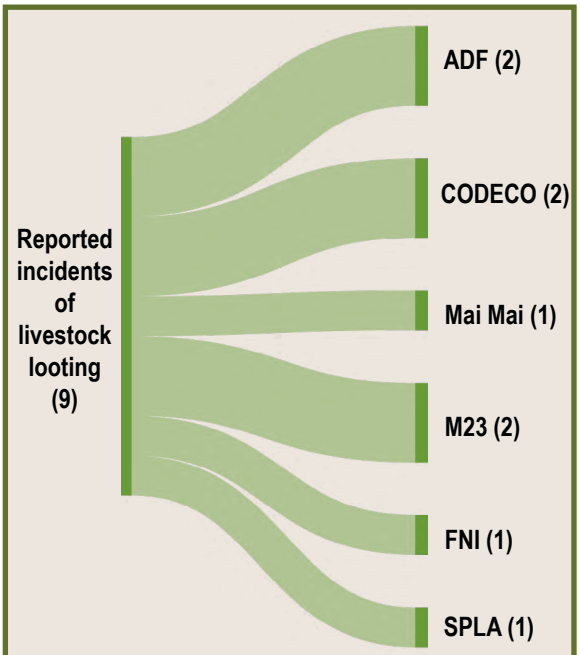
Reported livestock looting and killing in North Kivu and Ituri by conflict party

- The looting of livestock—including cattle, goats, and poultry—was reported recurrently between August 2024 and January 2025. Incidents were reported across several territories, notably Rutshuru, Irumu, Djugu, and Lubero.

- Seven different armed actors reportedly engaged in livestock looting of different numbers of animals in nine separate reported events during this period.

- In North Kivu, M23 reportedly looted more than 300 cows and several goats from Ngoroba village (Rutshuru) in early December, one of the largest single livestock raids in the period. In Ituri, FPIC elements stole over 70 cows in Bagelya (Irumu), while CODECO carried out repeated livestock thefts in Djugu, including during attacks on villages near Largu and Ambe. ADF attacks in both provinces also involved the looting or destruction of domestic animals.

- In several cases, livestock theft was accompanied by physical violence or arson. In some cases, mass displacement followed. In August, South Sudanese soldiers entered Kameru 2 (Aru, Ituri), where they reportedly stole livestock alongside arbitrary detentions and committed acts of sexual violence.



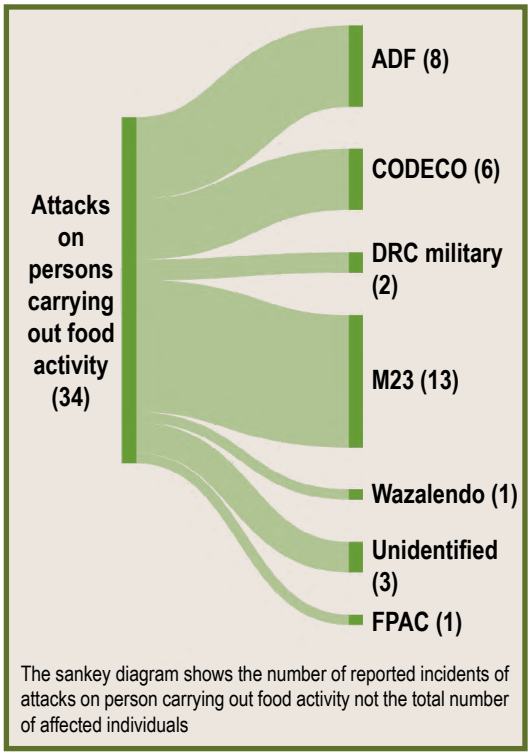
The sankey diagram shows the number of reported incidents of livestock looting not the total number of looted cattle

- Reporting barriers mean that the reported livestock looting figures are likely to only partially reflect the full extent of the problem.

"The future belongs to us": Reactions to the USAID Freeze in the DRC

This brief explores how the USAID freeze—an event with immediate humanitarian consequences and deeper political undertones—was perceived and debated across X and Facebook in the DRC from February to March 2025. Available in **English** and **French**.

Reported attacks on persons carrying out food activity in North Kivu and Ituri by conflict party



The sankey diagram shows the number of reported incidents of attacks on person carrying out food activity not the total number of affected individuals

- Attacks on civilians engaged in food-related activities—especially farming—were widespread in North Kivu and Ituri between August 2024 and January 2025. Most incidents occurred in Rutshuru, Beni, Irumu, and Djugu, where individuals were killed, abducted, or harassed while working in fields or collecting food.
- M23, ADF, and CODECO were the most frequently reported perpetrators. M23 was linked to repeated killings of farmers in Rutshuru, including a series of attacks in Kiseguru and surrounding villages. ADF killed dozens of civilians in Beni, Irumu, and Mambasa, often targeting people in remote agricultural areas. In Djugu, CODECO and Zaire abducted or executed farmers in areas like KabaKaba forest and Kudjangumi.
- Some victims were displaced persons or women collecting food, while others faced threats such as illegal taxation, forced displacement, or bans on accessing farmland. The pattern of attacks suggests a deliberate effort by armed actors to disrupt livelihoods and assert control over rural areas.

Foreseeable impacts of food-related violence on food security

- Sustained violence targeting farmers, livestock, and agricultural supply routes in North Kivu and Ituri is likely to have serious consequences for food security. The repeated killing and abduction of civilians while working in fields discourages agricultural activity and may lead to the abandonment of farmland.
- Widespread livestock looting deprives households of critical sources of food and income, and may drive the use of negative coping strategies, such as distress selling of assets or reducing food intake.
- Extortion at illegal checkpoints, armed group taxation on agricultural goods, and attacks near markets disrupt food trade and reduce physical access to food. Though this system is enforced by all conflict parties, the burning of homes, crops, and storage structures—especially during or shortly after harvest—may lead to lasting losses in food availability.
- Conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) against displaced women and those collecting food has critical impacts on food security. The rape of five women in Nyiragongo (November 2024) while gathering food highlights the risks involved in essential livelihood activities. Fear of violence limits women's mobility and access to land, especially in IDP settings where they are often primary food providers. CRSV also causes long-term trauma, social stigma, and economic hardship, further eroding community resilience.

Identified concerns

- Recurrent attacks on civilians—particularly farmers, market vendors, and individuals collecting food—by state and non-state armed actors contravene the principle of distinction under IHL and violate the right to life and personal security. These acts may constitute war crimes if civilians were intentionally targeted.
- The deliberate looting of livestock, destruction of crops and food stores, and extortion of food producers represent serious violations of the right to food as protected under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. These actions undermine both food availability and access, especially in displacement-affected and conflict-prone areas.
- Incidents of conflict related sexual violence—particularly against women collecting food or living in IDP camps—constitute violations of IHL and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. CRSV may amount to a war crime or crime against humanity. These attacks further limit women's mobility and access to livelihood activities, reinforcing gender-based inequalities and contributing to food insecurity.
- The forced dismantling of IDP camps and violence against displaced persons violate the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.
- Armed group imposition of illegal taxes on farmers and markets constitutes economic exploitation and may be classified as pillage—a prohibited act under customary IHL and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. These practices erode local food economies and threaten civilian livelihoods.
- The disruption or loss of critical food security information systems (e.g., FEWSNET) impairs early warning and response capabilities, violating the right to seek and receive information.

Key resolutions

African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC)

- Communiqué of the 1256th Emergency Ministerial Meeting (**28 January 2025**)

United Nations Security Council

- Resolution **2773**; Resolution **2765**; Resolution **2738**

European Union (EU)

- Renewal of EU Restrictive Measures (**9 December 2024**)
- European Parliament Resolution (**13 February 2025**)

Recommendations and Methodology

For detailed recommendations on conflict and hunger in the DRC, definitions of data categories and the methodology, see Insecurity Insight's in-depth report: **Chronic Insecurity: How Armed Groups Undermine Food Security in Ituri and North Kivu Provinces** (February 2025).

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This document is funded and supported by the generous support of the H2H Fund which is supported by aid from the UK government. The opinions expressed in it do not reflect in any way the position of the H2H Network or the UK government who are not responsible for the content expressed in this document.

Suggested citation: Insecurity Insight. 2025. Monitoring brief: Food-related Violence in the North Kivu and Ituri provinces in the DRC (August 2024- January 2025) - Monitoring Brief, May 2025. Switzerland: Insecurity Insight. https://bit.ly/DRCFoodBriefMay2025

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