

# Emergency Update on Volcano Nyiragongo

#1 | 03 June 2021

## HIGHLIGHTS

- **Seismic tremors continue** in Goma
- UNHCR has deployed **emergency teams in Sake, Minova and Rutshuru**
- Approximately **550,000 people are in need of humanitarian assistance and 232 433 are internally displaced**
- **Around 390,445 people** have been affected by the
- **evacuation order in Goma**
- UNHCR started to provide emergency shelter assistance and distributing Core Relief Items to the most affected populations in Sake and will continue in coming days.

Source: UN OCHA – 31 May 2021.



UNHCR distributing plastic sheeting to displaced persons affected by the volcanic eruption in Sake, North Kivu Province. ©UNCHR2021/Sanne Biesmans.

## Situation Overview

- Following the eruption of Mount Nyiragongo volcano in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), thousands of people fled their homes on 22 May during the night towards Sake, Minova, Kiwanja in Rutshuru and Bukavu. Around 4,000 displaced people crossed the border into Rwanda seeking refuge, though the majority has since returned.
- According to local authorities, 31 people died in incidents linked to the eruption, including seven people killed by lava and five asphyxiated by gases.
- Since 27 May, the Congolese authorities have ordered a partial evacuation of the city of Goma due to the risk of another volcanic eruption and hundreds of thousands of people left the city in the following days. Many people left by road to Sake, west of Goma, and Rutshuru north of Goma, while others left by boat over Lake Kivu to Bukavu. Around 8,000 crossed the border to Rwanda. In the past days people have started returning to Goma, although the evacuation order is still in place.
- Seismic tremors continue. While experts say that they are losing intensity, the risk of a new eruption has not yet subsided.
- Some of the city's water and electricity networks have been damaged by the lava flow, cutting off all water and electricity in the northern parts of the city.
- There is a risk of cholera in Sake town – which normally has 65,000 inhabitants. Water resources and infrastructures are limited and now overwhelmed with over 120,000 additional people who came from Goma.

- Criminality and petty crime are present in Sake. Some IDPs have told our teams that their emergency relief items were stolen in Sake – including basic food items and kitchen utilities.

## Protection needs and challenges

- This latest disaster comes on top of the over 2 million people already displaced by brutal violence in North Kivu province, of which Goma is the capital. This year alone, 450,000 people have been forced to flee their homes.
- Numerous displaced people have been observed to return to Goma after the earthquakes have diminished, although the authorities have not yet authorized the return to Goma.
- Approximately 3,629 homes were affected by the eruption and 2,000 households are believed to have had their homes destroyed or damaged by the earthquakes.
- Both electricity and water supply systems in Goma have been damaged by the lava flow, limiting the access to drinking water and power in north of Goma town.
- UNHCR and partners are assessing specific protection needs, including family reunification, risk of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), and psychosocial needs for survivors and their families to coordinate a response through the protection cluster.
- Prices of food and non-food items in Goma and surrounding areas have increased, which negatively affects purchasing power of the local population and may lead to further food insecurity and economic vulnerability.
- There is a high risk of a cholera outbreak in Sake, as inadequate water and sanitation systems and facilities cannot cope with the growing numbers of displaced people. 35 suspected cases have been identified in the Sake health area so far and awaiting test results.
- Access to health remains a challenge for people in displacement as medical infrastructures are limited and have difficulties to respond to increased needs.

## Preparedness and response

UNHCR continues to work with the government, local communities, and other partners to help the internally displaced, offering shelter, core relief items and reinforcing the protection of human rights through a holistic coordinated response.



### PROTECTION

- To help improve the protection and safety of those displaced, UNHCR and its partners deployed protection monitors in Sake, Minova and Rutshuru. These will help in the identification, prevention and response to human rights violations.
- Evaluation missions have been carried out by UNHCR and its protection monitoring partners in the area of Minova, Sake and in Rutshuru. The main priorities for the displaced are access to shelter and core relief items (blankets, mosquito nets, hygiene kits, buckets, kitchen stoves etc.), latrines construction and access to food. Local health structures and centres that host unaccompanied children are further in need of support.



## SHELTER AND CORE RELIEF ITEMS (CRI)

- UNHCR response is predominantly focused on providing emergency shelters to displaced people and opening hosting sites in areas with a high concentration of IDPs, in coordination with UNICEF, to ensure sufficient latrines and water supply as a preventive measure in light of the high risk of cholera outbreaks.
- In Bukavu, Ndendere site, which is normally used by UNHCR as a transit centre for voluntary repatriations, has been transformed into an IDP hosting area, accommodating 369 people while awaiting their return to Goma.
- The Shelter Cluster, which is co-led by UNHCR, has assessed the housing situation of the newly displaced. Most people are staying with host families, while others are staying in overcrowded churches and schools. The cluster estimates that 350,000 people are in urgent need of housing and basic items like sleeping mats, blankets, and kitchen utilities following the volcanic eruption.
- UNHCR has started to provide emergency shelter support to people who are sleeping in the open air in Sake and is preparing for the distribution of core relief items. So far 4,000 families received plastic sheeting, while community shelters are under construction, which will accommodate another 400 persons.
- UNHCR provided 100 blankets and 100 sleeping mats to an orphanage which was based in Goma and has brought over 250 children in Sake, where they are now temporarily accommodated in a local school.

## Coordination

- UNHCR is part of the coordinated response together with head of the local authorities, Administrateur du Territoire (AT), in Sake, North Kivu province and UNICEF, Red Cross, ADES, HEAL Africa and other local humanitarian actors. Together with protection, the main priority areas established are shelter, WASH, health and food. UNHCR will help with protection and shelter.
- A regional inter-organizational committee, “Comité Régional Inter-Organisation” (CRIO) meeting was organized on 27 May in Bukavu, South Kivu Province in order to put in place a joint support mechanism with the partners from Bukavu town.



**REPUBLIQUE DEMOCRATIQUE DU CONGO**  
Eruption du volcan Nyiragongo dans la province du Nord-Kivu  
au 31 mai 2021

