HIGHLIGHTS

- On 22 May, the Nyiragongo volcano near the city of Goma in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) erupted.
- The Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) assured Congolese authorities of the humanitarian community’s support to respond to emergency priority needs following the eruption of the Nyiragongo volcano
- Priority needs are being assessed by multiple Humanitarian Country Teams (HCT), including the Red Cross and INGOs
- 31 reported deaths, including 13 people during the evacuation of the city and 24 people burned by the lava; 40 adults have been reported missing; several hospitalizations
- More than 4,500 households (approx. 20,000 Congolese) made homeless
- While lava has stopped flowing, subsequent earth tremors are ongoing and cause panic among the population
- Ash cloud likely to cause respiratory diseases
- Goma and Bukavu airport closures likely to affect logistics for the humanitarian response

SITUATION OVERVIEW

On 22 May 2021, the Nyiragongo volcano which looms over Goma town in eastern DRC, erupted with lava streams pouring down towards the east in the direction of Rwanda. Another lava stream headed in the direction of Goma town and stopped 300 meters from Goma International Airport. The last major eruption (2002) resulted in over 250 deaths.

Following the eruption, many of the local population evacuated during the night towards Saké, located 27 km west of Goma, and another group crossed the border into Rwanda seeking refuge. Cross-border movements into Uganda were less significant and 90 per cent of Congolese have returned to the DRC.

1 According to the IOM, see the full report.
On 23 May, a helicopter reconnaissance mission with the Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator and an OCHA team confirmed that lava has blocked the main RN 2 Rutshuru-Goma road – the principal supply line for food into Goma. Power lines and water supply have been damaged and cut-off to approx. 500,000 people.

Three villages and one neighborhood in the city of Goma were destroyed by the lava on the DRC side. Thirteen civilians lost their lives during the night of 22 May due to evacuation-related incidents (mostly vehicle crashes). Civil society\(^2\) in the Nyiragongo health zone confirm that 24 people, among whom 10 are women, were burned by lava, and 40 adults are missing. The remains already identified will be handed over to their respective families on 24 May 2021. It is also reported that over 3,629 houses were ravaged by lava, 23 roofs of houses were blown away, the Goma-Rutshuru road is cut off (about 2 km invaded by lava) and 3 health structures as well as 12 primary and secondary schools were destroyed.

According to IOM, more than 20,000 people (about 4,500 households) would be homeless and would live in host communities or in public places not affected by the disaster. People have lost their possessions either in the rush to move, or burnt by the lava flow, or looted. Cases of theft, particularly of motorbikes and other property left behind by displaced households, have also been reported.

UNICEF reported that more than 150 children were separated from their families and more than 170 children are feared to be missing as people fled the city of Goma following the eruption of the Nyiragongo volcano.

Earth tremors have been felt intermittently. The Rwandan seismic monitor recorded earthquakes reaching 5.1 magnitude originated from Lake Kivu in the Rubavu district. These are causing cracks in buildings and place further stress on a population that is already traumatized. Authorities warned the population to remain vigilant and remain out of the red zone, the lava path of the 2002 eruption. It is expected that ash emanating from the eruption may cause respiratory diseases.

Some shops have reopened on 24 May. Prices have reportedly increased in the markets. Based on primary assessment, not all people that fled to the neighboring town of Saké have returned. People report that taxi prices have increased. Other people have remained as they lost everything in the eruption.

The road between Goma and Rutshuru, which is one of the three major commercial axis and key for delivery of humanitarian assistance to other places, remains blocked. The lava is too hot to be removed for the moment. Goma International Airport remains closed and civil aviation authorities have informed that the airport will not be operational until further notice. This means that it will be difficult to fly in assistance, reinforce teams or evacuate staff, which will impact humanitarian response. Bukavu airport was also closed due to the ash cloud. Alternatives to access other areas by road via Rwanda or Uganda should be explored, which may be complicated due to COVID-19 restrictions.

The DRC prime minister, together with 12 ministers, met on 24 May 2021 with the Humanitarian Coordinator and the HCT. The Government activated its contingency plan which highlighted the following priorities: shelter, opening the Rutshuru-Goma road, tracing children and opening the Goma airport.

**COORDINATION**

The Government of DRC is in the lead on the response. The DRC government is leading the response. Conducted by the Minister of Defence, a delegation of eight ministers travelled to Goma to lead the humanitarian response.

The Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) has assured the DRC Government of the support of the humanitarian community. The HC is in contact with the Resident Coordinators of Rwanda and Uganda to consider coordinated cross-border responses.

\(^2\) Solidarité Féminine pour la paix et le développement (SOFEPADI)
On 23 May, the HC called an ad hoc Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) meeting to define the framework to inform the response. In addition, OCHA has led ad hoc coordination meetings in Goma and Kinshasa (inter-cluster in Kinshasa and regional HCT in Goma).

OCHA is creating a database with the ongoing needs assessments. A mapping of the partners’ capacities and stocks is currently being carried out. A joint needs analysis and response plan will be developed in the coming days.

A hotline for children and family reunification has been set up (+243 970 351 202 and +243 974 551 013).

**PRIORITY NEEDS**

Multiple rapid assessment missions are underway or planned in WASH, child protection, education, and health. In addition to shelter, WASH, food, non-food items and protection, the need for mental health support has been identified. OCHA set up a crisis cell in Goma to coordinate all assessments and response. According to IOM, nearly 21,000 displaced persons are reported.

The volcanic eruption comes at a time of acute ancillary humanitarian need in North Kivu and Ituri. A State of Siege was declared by the Government to be in force in the two provinces since early May. Some 44 per cent of the 5.04 million IDPs in DRC are currently located in North Kivu. 3.2 million people are already in dire need of food assistance in a province that has the highest protection incidences (5,856) in the country (HNO 2021).

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