

Majority of refugees flowing into Rwanda from DRC volcano are children: Save the Children

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Alice fled to Rwanda after the Nyiragongo volcano erupted six days ago. Photo credit: Theophile Harushyamagara/Save the Children. More content [here](#)*

Rubavu, Rwanda (28 May, 2021) – In the past 24 hours at least 3,000 people, including 1,800 childrenⁱ, have crossed into Rubavu district in Rwanda from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) following increasingly volatile volcanic eruptions near the major town of Goma. Earthquakes are continuing in the region, with communities on edge for another violent eruption.

On 22 May the sudden eruption of Nyiragongo volcano sent lava flowing into populated areas of Goma, destroying around 1,000 homes in four villages, six schools and vital infrastructure, cutting off power and water supplies to hundreds of thousands of people. Under the threat of another eruption, tens of thousands of people were yesterday ordered to leave Goma, and are now moving in their thousands to neighbouring towns and into Rwanda, where the situation on the border in Rubavu district is desperate.

The Rubavu District Government is expecting around 10,000 people to cross into Rwanda in the coming days and has set up three temporary refugee sites: Inyemeramihigo site to accommodate 6,000 people, Busasamana site to accommodate 2,000 and Nyundo site to accommodate other 2,000 people.

Save the Children has a team on the ground in Rubavu, working to establish emergency child protection systems, register lost children, and provide support and family tracing and reunification for unaccompanied and separated children. Save the Children has also mobilized donations of essential items like mattresses and water buckets to the area, to distribute to displaced children and families.

Aurore Kiberinka, Save the Children’s Child Protection Case Manager in Rwanda said:

“The three camps in Rubavu district are still receiving new refugees from DRC, the majority of whom are children. Yesterday alone, at least 800 children with their families joined the Inyemerahimigo Camp. Many of these children came with just the clothes on their backs. We are incredibly concerned for their welfare and are doing everything in our power to keep them safe while they are displaced. We are working with the Government to get systems in place in case of another sudden eruption.”

Maggie Korde, Save the Children’s Country Director in Rwanda said:

“We are waiting with baited breath to see what the volcano will do in coming hours, days and weeks. If it were to fully erupt, we would have a humanitarian catastrophe on our hands. 60% of the people coming across the border into Rwanda are children. They are tired, hungry and scared, and our teams are working around the clock to meet their needs. I’m incredibly proud of their efforts, in a very difficult environment. We are working hard to ensure these kids are safe and protected while their parents seek out the essentials to keep their family while displaced.”

Save the Children is also in Goma, where it is working with the local partner Umoja in Action to support the reunification of children with their families, together with the Child Protection Working Group and other actors.

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ⁱ As of yesterday evening, around 3,000 DRC refugees have crossed over to Rubavu District, Rwanda with 60% of the population being children. 70% are women (young girls and adults) while men are 30%.