

Emergency Update on Volcano Nyiragongo

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Highlights

- **Between November and January, 2,092 households received cash assistance,** which will give them the means to pay their rent after losing their homes during the eruption.
- **UNHCR, through its partner INTERSOS, recorded 451 protection incidents in Rutshuru and Masisi Territories,** North Kivu.
- **3,570 survivors of the eruption remain displaced in Rutshuru and Masisi Territories,** according to UNHCR's partner INTERSOS.



Survivors of the Mount Nyiragongo eruption received cash to help them pay their rent after the destruction of their homes. © UNHCR/Takaaki Miura

Situation Overview

- The eruption of the Mount Nyiragongo volcano on 22 May 2021 forced more than 364,000 people to flee their homes in Goma and surrounding areas, according to OCHA's estimates. The majority of the people have since returned, but some 3,570 people (1,119 households) remain displaced in Masisi and Rutshuru Territories, according to UNHCR's protection monitoring partner INTERSOS.
- According to the Division des Affaires Humanitaires (DIVAH), 3,276 people are living in spontaneous sites and almost 1500 households in the formal sites of Kanyaruchinya and Kibati. The site of Bujari is still under construction, with a planned capacity of 130 households. Military and police around the camps control movements in the vicinity to avoid intruders and security issues.
- After benefitting from rental assistance between December and January, a total of 2,092 displaced families moved on from the spontaneous sites of Mujioga, Kanyania and the Kahembe, which are Primary Schools being used by the local populations as makeshift shelter, to more sustainable housing.
- Volcano activity continued to be observed during January. Magma movements were monitored by volcano experts, including the Observatoire Volcanologique de Goma (OVG). New lava spilling inside the crater, referred to as "lava fountains", build and subside due to pressurized gas, and cause tremors in the surrounding areas of Goma. According to the experts, this is a return to the volcano's natural state and likely a sign that there is now less pressure underground – and thus less likelihood of a repetition of an eruption of the sort that occurred on 22 May 2021.

Preparedness and response



PROTECTION

- Many of the 3,570 people (1,119 households) who remain displaced in Masisi and Rutshuru Territories are unable to return to Goma, due to lack of means to pay the transport fees and the rents in the city, as well as the absence of opportunities to re-start income generating activities and difficult living conditions in the temporary sites in Goma. Some others chose to stay in Masisi and Rutshuru Territories as they started to integrate locally and were able to count on the solidarity of the host community.
- From November to December 2,021, UNHCR, through its partner INTERSOS, recorded 451 protection incidents in Rutshuru and Masisi Territories, in the areas hosting persons who fled the eruption. These include extorsions, kidnappings, batteries, arbitrary arrests, murders, and forced labour. 44 families have benefitted from cash for protection assistance, with the support of the Humanitarian Fund (HF).
- The remaining site of Bujari, which is under the coordination of the Congolese authorities with 123 shelters already built by the Red Cross, lacks infrastructures to secure sufficient clean water and sanitation for the survivors of the volcano eruption. Some 120 families of displaced people living there have to travel 2 km to access clean water. The humanitarian division of the local authorities (DIVAH) is in contact with the WASH cluster to address this need and avoid the possible outbreak of epidemics. UNHCR's protection and CCCM teams are working with other parts of the cluster system to identify needs and priorities, and to advocate for updated policies.



SHELTER AND CORE RELIEF ITEMS (CRI)

- UNHCR is continuing to work with authorities to obtain land to build 600 transitional shelters for families who lost their homes. In the meantime, the Government gave its approval to UNHCR to provide 1,425 former household owners with cash-for-rent assistance in order to avoid the multiplication of temporary sites.
- Thanks to the funding of the Humanitarian Fund (HF), and after months of negotiation with the Government coordination body overseeing volcano response (DIVAH), UNHCR provided rental assistance to 2,092 families who lost their homes during the Nyiragongo volcano eruption and were still living in formal and informal sites such as Mujoga, Kanyanja, and Kahembe. Rental assistance allows the affected families to move to better and safer housing and to avoid long term residence in sites that the Government was unwilling to see turned into more permanent arrangements. 126 households who were identified later continue to live in these sites and will be able to move out after benefitting from rental assistance which is planned early February after a thorough evaluation of their needs. The evaluation has taken particular care to assess the risk of exploitation, including sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), post-distribution monitoring will remain alert to these problems for all cash recipients.
- With an extension of the Humanitarian Fund project until end April, a final decision will be taken by the end of January regarding the funds allocated for the 600 transitional houses if land is not allocated in time. The options include shifting the building plans to the remaining hosting areas, and cash assistance to help those who prefer to return to Goma to re-establish their businesses. UNHCR has reached out to the Humanitarian Fund already and will review the options with the Board in the last week of January.

Clusters and Coordination

- Following the departure of 2,092 displaced families who left the Mujonga, Kanyanja, and Kahembe sites to rented houses in the surrounding neighborhood, 203 households remain present and are effectively halting the closure of these sites by the authorities. Cooperation between UNHCR, particularly through the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) working group, the authorities, and humanitarian actors involved in the response is continuing in an effort to find a way out for these families and thus allowing the closure of these sites.
- As many humanitarian actors were funded for a period of six months, some assistance projects ended in December, leaving many residents in Goma in even more precarious conditions due to the lack of social support and even basic infrastructures. Although the majority of Goma's inhabitants are not there to seek humanitarian support, discussions have started with donors to address the needs for more and better infrastructures in the country's second largest city where so many humanitarian agencies are based. Advocacy for better road, water and electricity infrastructures will continue - including with development actors in order to identify viable solutions over the course of 2022 and beyond.

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Contacts

Joel Smith, Communications Officer, UNHCR Representation Kinshasa, smithj@unhcr.org, Tel: +243 817 009 484

Vittoria Moretti, Associate External Relations and Reporting Officer, UNHCR Representation Kinshasa, moretti@unhcr.org, Tel: +243 820 556 659

Sanne Biesmans, External Relations and Reporting Officer, UNHCR Sub-Office Goma, biesmans@unhcr.org. Tel: +243 829 968 603

Margot Dunand, Associate External Relations and Reporting Officer, UNHCR Sub-Office Goma, dunand@unhcr.org. Tel: +243 821 352 375

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