

DREF operation update



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Democratic Republic of Congo: Nyiragongo and Nyamuragira volcano eruption alert in Goma

DREF operation n°
MDRCD007
GLIDE n° n° VO-2009-000076-
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Update n° 01
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The International Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) is a source of un-earmarked money created by the Federation in 1985 to ensure that immediate financial support is available for Red Cross and Red Crescent response to emergencies. The DREF is a vital part of the International Federation's disaster response system and increases the ability of National Societies to respond to disasters.

Period covered by this update: **15 April to 30 June 2009.**

Summary: on 15 April 2009, CHF 63,780 (USD 55,475 or EUR 41,941) was allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to support the response of Red Cross of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the escalated threat posed to about 1,000,000 people by intensive volcanic activities in the city of Goma and its surroundings.

The DREF allocation is used to support The Red Cross of the DRC preparedness and awareness raising activities in close coordination with the Observatoire de Volcanologie de Goma (OVG), Provincial authorities, ICRC and other stakeholders, thus mitigating potential effects of lava flowing to high risk cities.

The major donors of the DREF are the Irish, Italian, Netherlands and Norwegian governments and ECHO.

Details of all donors can be found on:

<http://www.ifrc.org/what/disasters/responding/drs/tools/dref/donors.asp>

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One of the 30 new early warning sign posts in the streets of Goma

The situation

The city of Goma and the area of Nyiragongo in the Northern Kivu province (eastern part of the country) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) are threatened by unusual activity of the Nyiragongo and Nyamuragira volcanoes. Reports from the government and the Observatoire de Volcanologie de Goma say that since January 2009 Nyiragongo and Nyamuragira volcanoes have been showing recurrent seismic

tremors of volcanic nature, great range frequent volcanic tremors, visible seismic, geodesic, geochemical and geothermal signs. These were similar to the signs that preceded the last eruptions of the Nyiragongo. When the latter erupted on 17 January 2002, the lava destroyed one third of the city of Goma which population was then estimated at 400,000 inhabitants, causing massive population movements into the twin city of Gisenyi in Rwanda contaminating water sources. Another very high risk posed by volcanic eruptions in the area is eventual explosion of methane gas that abounds in Lake Kivu which would claim the lives of hundred thousands people in both Goma and Gisenyi. As the population of both cities have almost doubled since 2002, it is expected that any future volcanic eruption will affect more than 1,000,000 people.

Despite the high risks, the interagency contingency plan that was developed after the 2002 eruption of Nyiragongo was outdated, as well as the National Society's preparedness plans. Therefore, based on the responsibilities assigned to the National Society in the framework of the 2002/2003 interagency contingency plan, the North-Kivu section of the Red Cross of the DRC set up an emergency team to monitor the situation and eventually respond to the emergency. The emergency team will update the contingency plan with regards to volcano eruptions, sensitize populations and put logistic means at their disposal, identify sites for the displaced, and update the warning system and plan of evacuation of populations.

Coordination and partnerships

After the warning report issued by the OVG, the provincial government convened a meeting with all national and international partners, and local authorities. Various tasks were assigned to Red Cross of DRC/North Kivu as one of the most experienced organizations in disaster management. The tasks ranged from updating preparedness plans to conducting community awareness activities on the risks and the response plans. The Red Cross of DRC supported by the Federation conducted its activities in close coordination with Rwandan Red Cross, ICRC, Provincial authorities and the OVG. The OVG scientists carried out assessments and provided the information which served as a basis for Red Cross planning. OCHA also provided maps which were used to map out resettlement sites as well as evacuation routes and exit points. The work done by the Red Cross is seen as a very important and integrated part of the overall provincial disaster preparedness activities. Thus, very strong linkages have been developed with the provincial disaster management committee (Protection Civile), the Police and the section of the army in charge of natural disasters.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Progress towards objectives

DRC Red Cross North Kivu Branch Volcano eruption preparedness

Objective: To improve the operational activities of the Red Cross of DRC/North Kivu in terms of response in the event of a massive population displacement.

Activities planned:

- A workshop to update the contingency plan will be conducted. This workshop will gather authorities from the DRC and Rwandan Red Cross, the Federation, ICRC and local authorities from both countries (25 people).
- Setting up of a Centre for emergency operations and procedures in Goma, Gisenyi and Bukavu.
- Updating of the warning system: the warning chain, which starts from the OVG up to families and volunteers, community representatives and warning signs will be worked out and tested (30 people).
- Identification of evacuation walkways, entrance/exit ways (Rwandan border) and camps for displaced people in cooperation with Rwandan Red Cross and local authorities.
- Updating of the evacuation plan from high risk areas to temporary shelters, with involvement of local authorities, Red Cross of DRC volunteers and community representatives (20 people).

Progress:

The 2003 interagency contingency plan was reviewed and based on this the Red Cross contingency plan was developed. This was done in a three-day workshop that brought together representatives from the Red Cross of the DRC and Rwandan Red Cross, the Federation, ICRC, the provincial Disaster Management

Committee (Protection Civile), the Police, the Army, the Observatoire de Volcanologie de Goma and leaders from communities most at risk.



Participants to the contingency planning process

In another workshop with representatives from the same institutions, the Red Cross of the DRC/North Kivu branch Emergency Operations Coordination Centre and operations procedures were set up to facilitate decision making, operations coordination and communication during disasters.

In addition to Red Cross preparedness plans, the overall early warning and alert system under the umbrella of the Observatoire de Volcanologie de Goma was reviewed and updated. To reach out to more people in the areas most at risk, 30 new sign posts (billboards) were set up and 10 old ones have been rehabilitated. The early warning

information dissemination chain now includes the OVG, Provincial authorities, more than 40 sign posts, Red Cross volunteers organized in clusters of 10 households, and community leaders. The provincial evacuation plan was also updated. The evacuation plan included identification and mapping of resettlement sites and evacuation routes and exits. It has been planned that the government will integrate these important elements in the administrative maps of the area.

The plans and procedures that were developed will serve as a guide for further strengthening the Red Cross of the DRC disaster preparedness capacity building and coordinated disaster response in North Kivu Province.

Community disaster awareness and preparedness

Objective: To improve the level of information, knowledge of target populations for a better understanding of warning and evacuation processes, and the related measures taken.

Activities planned:

- Retraining of community representatives and those in charge of sensitizing within Red Cross of DRC/North Kivu. Eighteen (18) areas, three IDP camps, two volunteers and three community members for each area will be mobilized, with technical and material support from ICRC.
- Sensitization campaign in high risk areas for the dissemination of warning signs, communication about the most suitable behaviour in case of emergency, about evacuation walkways and camps for the displaced.
- Simulation exercise to test the warning system and evacuation plan, in cooperation with authorities and target communities and with participation of partners of the Red Cross Movement, local authorities (OVG, DPC, police) and other actors.
- Workshop for synthesis and information sharing with authorities and communities.

Progress

Thirty-six Red Cross and 65 community volunteers from 18 areas within Goma and its surroundings were trained in volcanoes awareness raising campaign using household based outreach approach with a multiplier factor. The training was conducted by the OVG and focused on understanding the risks posed by volcanic eruptions in the Virunga plain, assimilating the early warning and evacuation mechanisms and communicating this information to the community. Four thousands leaflets (2,000 in French; 2,000 in Swahili) were produced, 50 pairs of boots and 50 jackets were procured and distributed to volunteers from areas with difficult access.

It is expected that proximity sensitization activities will reach more than 700,000 people by the end of August 2009. About 55,000 people have been reached so far through 7,500 heads of households. Sensitization

activities on the national TV have expectedly reached out to more than a million people. These sensitization activities will continue to be carried out by Red Cross and Community volunteers, even after the end of the operation as they will be integrated into Red Cross routine community based programmes.

To test early warning and evacuation systems that have been developed and also actively engage large groups of people with sensitization activities, a real situation simulation exercise was organized. This exercise included 200 Red Cross volunteers, 700 community members, 20 officers from the provincial disaster management committee, the police, the army and the OVG, the media and other actors. Lessons learnt from the exercise helped fine tune during a review and information sharing meeting that was held with provincial authorities emergency operations procedures and develop measures to improve the precision of evacuation instructions for the population.

Challenges

The exercise revealed some important gaps in the technical and material capacity of the provincial disaster management committee to plan for and respond to emergencies in a timely and efficient manner. While some of the gaps must be resolved by providing adequate equipments to the committee, the Red Cross of the DRC supported by the Federation can provide training in some critical areas of the disaster management cycle. A request from the committee was sent to the Red Cross in that view and is being assessed. If implemented, such training will adequately complement the brainstorming exercise that is currently ongoing on the possibilities to enhance disaster management mechanisms throughout the country and that is partly funded by ICRC.

How we work	
<p>The International Federation's activities are aligned with its Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to meet the Federation's mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity".</p>	<p>Global Agenda Goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters. • Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies. • Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability. • Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.
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