

## Centre for Intercultural Missions and Research

### Report on the Relief Program about assisting the destitute and equipping Christian Leaders affected by the volcanic eruption of Nyiragongo Volcano on 22 Mai 2021.

22 May – 31 July 2021, Goma DRC

### Introduction

This report details the response of CIMR ministry and its mission partners to the emotional and physical devastation caused by the recent sudden volcanic eruption of Nyiragongo volcano in Goma, the capital city of the province of North Kivu in the Democratic Republic of Congo. In other words, the report briefly narrates the assistance that CIMR brought to the destitute, families and church leaderships who have been affected by the volcanic eruption. That assistance/response was done at three different levels:

- (a) we chose to assist 54 most vulnerable and elderly couples (retired people) and unsupported widows with emergency aid-kits of food and no-food to which we added psychological and pastoral care sessions;
- (b) we also purposely mobilized and equipped 73 Christian leaders from Goma (especially those from the affected zone) on their holistic response to the effects of the sudden eruption on their churches and immediate communities.
- (c) overwhelmed with the dreadful situation of few families that were affected, we initiated the process to provide shelter to three households.

Secondly, this report also describes the three consecutive trainings of affected church leaders (male, female, and youth) on the Christian response to the effects of the eruption. In each training, during pastoral care and group therapies, participants expressed their griefs caused by the volcanic eruption. The majority of participants shared their moving stories on how the eruption affected them. It is good to note that most of the participants lost their belongings and houses in the lava of the volcanic eruption of 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2021. With the permission of some of them, we have attached some of their stories.

Lastly, the report gives a picture of the budget needed and how the fund was allocated towards assisting the destitute in the post-volcanic eruption and towards organizing the trainings.



Relief store at the CIMR center



A staff preparing for food distribution to destitutes



Distribution day

## **i. Assisting the Destitute**

The volcanic eruption in Goma has disrupted the lives of the entire population causing physical damage through lava flowing over 2000 households depriving many of their homes and possessions, as well as psychological damage exposing them to stress, spiritual and even economic frustration making it a cry for help requiring not only a humanitarian response but also a Christian response which must be a holistic response.

Furthermore, the government forced the population of 10 neighborhoods to evacuate to Sake and others crossed to Rutshuru where most of them had no access to relief and support. Since the Kyeshero neighborhood, in which our mission training Center and our home are located, was not concerned by the evacuation, we had the opportunity to welcome and care for families at home as well as thirty people in our mission Centre (specifically providing them with accommodation and food for two weeks before people were allowed to return back to Goma). This was an opportunity for us as a family and ministry to exercise the welcoming as it is the habit of missionaries and offer services of love to needy people, with the support of our ministry friends and partners. It is in this light that CIMR ministry in its emergency relief project, in addition to the families it hosted and cared for during the evacuation, has given hope to 54 families of the victims most affected by the sudden eruption by offering them a survival kit (Food and Non-food) and pastoral care.

### **(i) Pastoral Care**

In a holistic approach to the Christian response to natural disasters, CIMR provided 45 elderly people (retired pastors, widows of retired pastors and the elderly) with pastoral care and both spiritual and psychological support as they went through a difficult survival situation related to the eruption of the Nyiragongo volcano. Some of them have built small shelters for retirement and other widows' tenants with children and grandchildren under their care whose hope and joy of living was lost have seen it reborn from ashes following this support session. This is the case of a widow Ruchocha of a retired pastor of a Baptist community who expressed her joy and gratitude. *"I am a widow and I struggle alone to face difficult situations and I shut myself in. This organization has shown me that there are many people who care about us, the moment of sharing has given me the strength to face the situation we are going through now and even though I know the situation is very difficult but this message has given me hope again and reminded me that God is with us even in suffering and that I must learn to continually bring my burden to the cross of Christ."* Like Ruchocha, many widows and retired pastors have taken back a smile and hope in the face of this moment of uncertainty. It was around a meal of communion with these servants of God often abandoned by their community that this accompaniment was closed.



Hymns and spiritual songs during pastoral care



Closing of the pastoral care with a communion meal.



Retired pastor Rvd Ndibamwe full of joy and hope after the pastoral care session.

## (2) Survival kit and cash reception

Fifty-one families most affected by the eruption facing difficulty in accessing the minimum for their survival including retired pastors, widows of retired pastors and elderly people have benefited from the CIMR office with a survival kit consisting of basic necessities including 12,5kg of corn flour, 6kg of beans, 5kg of rice, 2.5 litre of vegetable oil, 1kg of salt and non-living items including 1kg of soap powder for hygiene and a blanket against bad weather. To meet the minimum needs that the survival kit could not cover they were given a minimum of ten US dollars cash which they received with thanksgiving and celebration. *"It was very difficult to feed my little sons whose parents have already died, but what God just did for us I lack words to express my gratitude."* – one of the beneficiaries said.



A retired pastor receiving his survival kit



A beneficiary receiving cash from Jackson's hand.



A widow of a retired pastor receiving her survival Kit

## (3) Volunteers and Staff

The volunteers were a great blessing to our ministry during this time of distribution and pastoral care, their commitment was full of love and grace at this time of difficulty for the city of Goma. Netia, one of the volunteers touched by the event confided in the evaluation meeting and the prayer after the activity: *“I had never seen an old man laughing and at the time of their coming my impression was always affirming, but to see them laughing and joyful during the pastoral care and the distribution touched me enormously and I understood that it does not always take too much to spread love around us and to bring back a smile, often it just requires a gesture of love as insignificant as it may seem.”* The gratitude of our staff and volunteers was very great when they received the supply of food (rice, sugar, corn flour), benefiting also from a financial support that came from one of our partner churches (in UK) to face the urgent needs during the crisis, in this moment of difficulties they experienced the grace of God who even in times of greatest uncertainty always takes care of them.



Family photo of the volunteers



Volunteers unloading the truck with food and non-food items.



A volunteer helps a widow carry her survival kit.

We celebrate God for what he has accomplished in the midst of suffering through love and unity in the body of Christ.

#### **(4) Construction of temporary shelters and economic and educational reintegration**

The need for emergency aid is urgent and requires an immediate response. The Buhene district which was covered by the lava has led to several already poor families lacking the most basic necessities of life, inaccessibility to housing and a precarious economic situation. After receiving a pledge from one of our partners, we have identified three families in great need, one of whom lives in a former laboratory of a health centre, sleeping on the floor, and two others who sleep on the floor in a small borrowed annex. Their need was for a viable temporary shelter, economic reintegration through an IGA, and schooling for their children. At present, they have been economically reintegrated for family food survival through an IGA and forty metal sheets have been purchased as a first step towards building viable temporary shelters. We thank God for what has been done so far and continue to pray and mobilize the means for these families in distress to rediscover the happiness of life and the slalom of God.

### **2. Report on the three Trainings from 24 June – 02 July 2021 (Training Church leaders on the Christian response to post volcanic eruption effects, trauma and suffering in the ethnic conflict of Buhene)**

As a ministry we quickly noticed that humanitarian forces and the government of DRC quickly took over the humanitarian response with some actions and that the church could well intervene by providing care and hope to traumatized victims. However, our rapid assessment of the post eruption situation of Buhene identified further that ,due to ethnic conflicts that caused the clash prior to the eruption, few groups of people (including the elderly) were not accessing the aid (food and shelter). Although the church was also affected by the sudden eruption of the Nyiragongo, it had to be equipped on how to take up its responsibility by responding to the traumatic context and minister to both the victims and their entirely immediate communities at large. Thus, the trainings we organized to equip (1) pastoral leadership of 20 pastors from 10 local churches of different denominations, (2) 33 women leaders from these church churches, and (3) 25 youth ministry leaders (selected from Buhene and other churches) was used not only to point them to ways and methods to respond to the traumatic context that was in Goma through a holistic discipleship approach but was served the CIMR ministry to call the church to action as a missional church. The church in Eastern Congo is to be reminded its mandate of being the voice, feed and the hands of God in the Congolese Context. This explain why we used training as one of the key components of our response to the sudden eruption.

#### (1) Date and Venue of the trainings

The training-workshops took place from 24<sup>th</sup> June to 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2021 on site of the Centre for Intercultural Missions and Research in the city of Goma, in Kyeshero neighbourhood. Since the country celebrated its 61th anniversary of independence on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021, the training did not take place on that day.

#### (2) Training Team

The members of the training team were Dr. Eraston Kighoma who serves as the director; Mr. Jackson Kambere who serves as a board member. During the training, Mr. Jackson served as a facilitator of the trainings; Mr. Michée Mbolela, a missionary and a clinic psychologist by profession, who led most of the training sessions; and Esperance Kavugho who serves both as a mobiliser and a teacher at CIMR. The four members were mostly and actively involved in the teaching during the training. On Friday, one of the well renowned Christian counsellors in Goma, Mrs Kabugho Binagha, joined the training to train pastors' wives on trauma counselling from the Christian perspective.

#### (3) Agenda for each of the 3 trainings

The training team agreed a draft agenda prior to the training-workshop which was approved by the participants, as follows:

##### *Day 1*

- Opening hymn and Prayer
- Devotion
- Breakfast
- First lesson
- Lunch break

- Second Lesson
- Closing Prayer

*Day 2*

- Opening hymn and prayer
- Devotion
- Breakfast
- First Lesson
- Lunch break
- Group Therapy

*Day 3 (Youth Leaders only)*

- Opening hymn and prayer
- Devotion
- Breakfast
- First Lesson: Stress Management
- Lunch break
- Group therapy

Adjustments had to be made to the agenda, in light of various considerations, such as the degree of tiredness of participants, their engagements elsewhere, the desire to express themselves especially during therapy sessions. For instance, pastors' wives had to leave for some house chores on Day 1. Unlike other the two trainings that took two days each, the youth leaders' training took three days, from 24<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

(4) Participants

The first training was attended by twenty-five youth leaders and five CIMR members; it went from 24<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> June 2021. The second training was attended by twenty pastors and five CIMR members; it took place on Monday 28<sup>th</sup> and Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> July 2021. The third training was attended by 28 women, 5 CIMR members, and a Christian trauma counsellor; it took place on Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> June and Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2021. All the participants had come from different church denominations in Goma: Arche de l'Alliance, CEPAC, CEBCA, CBCE, and CECA 20. In each training, the participants had a chance to present the outcomes and recommendations from the training-workshops, and the trainers had a chance to comment on and fine-tune some recommendations.

(5) The Training-Workshops

The following paragraph shows how a typical day looked like.

*Day One*

In each training, Dr. Eraston Kighoma would lead the participants in a reflection on Psalm 84. Dr. Eraston highlighted the need for being "oasis of hope", to be a solution in the midst of war and post-volcanic eruption. After the devotion, he stated the objectives of the trainings as follows:

- To encourage one another; to assist people who have been affected by the volcanic eruption.
- To think together on the solution from the local church of how to deal with stress.
- How to do pastoral ministry in the context that has been affected by war, ethnic conflicts and volcanic eruption.

After laying the objectives of the training, the participants would take breakfast for about 20 minutes. Afterwards, Miss Esperance would take the participants through “The Heart of God for the mission.” In her presentation, she reminded the participants of the urgency of the gospel by explaining the God’s plan for salvation and showing the astonishing statistic of the unreached-by-gospel communities around the world.



Women playing during the therapy session



Dr. Eraston teaching women on discipleship

In the afternoon, Dr. Eraston would explain the need for participants to restore their congregants and members of their immediate community who have been broken by the pressures of life. He said that most behaviors are caused by one of these roots: sin, lies, stress, and traumatism. Then, Dr. Eraston took it back and explain “discipolat et relation d’aide” (discipleship and pastoral care) where people raised questions which were answered.

### *Day Two*

Through its program of Oasis of hope, the Centre for Intercultural Missions and Research saw it necessary to gather pastors’ wives in order to equip them in the training that took two days so that they may be fountains of hope to the destitute people who have been affected by the volcanic eruption.

On this second day of the training, Dr. Eraston started with devotion of the call of Abram. He explained the call of Abraham who was called to be an oasis of hope in the midst of a broken world. In the same sense, he called pastors’ wives to be oasis of hope in the midst of war and the post-volcanic eruption. He also emphasis on the need for the pastors’ wives to follow the pattern of Sarah who accepted and obeyed God’s call for Abraham.



Youth leaders singing during the training



Dr. Eraston teaching pastors during the training

After the devotion, the participants took their breakfast (tea and bread). Then, Michée Mbolela proceeded with the lesson on “managing stress”, a lesson he had started on Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> June.

On day two, Mrs. Binagha took the women and explained in detailed on trauma and stress. He went on to share her story on his experience on the volcanic eruption of the 17<sup>th</sup> January 2002.

### *Day Three*

The training of pastors and women took two days. Only the of the youth went up to day three. On day three, Michée Mbolela would participants went through a group therapy. Michée Mbolela, a Christian psychologist, would

#### (6) Outcome of the training-workshop

This training was designed to strengthening the participants who have been affected by the volcanic eruption. The following paragraphs show the impact of the trainings on the participants:

*“Thank you for the devotion. I have learnt from this devotion that it is possible to create life in the desert.”*

*“Being an oasis also means that we can be an encouragement to others. We should be encouraging people who have been affected by the volcanic eruption. We should not be a source discouragement.”*

*“Sometimes the lack of financial support, we fail to create oasis of hope in our...”*

*“I used to interpret this passage in a wrong way. I used to think that it’s God who transforms the valley of Baca into a source of life. It is the people who transform.”*

*“I pray that the church can collect psychologists in order to assist people who have been traumatized with the volcanic eruption. I am a living testimony; my family has been traumatized and I believe the church should do something.”*

*“After the eruption, after the eruption. I fled with my four young brothers on the motorcycle. We fled to our family members in Himbi but found no one. We decided to go to Mugunga but it was crowded. Once in Mugunga, I had to go back to Goma to pick others on a motorcycle. When there were rumors about gas eruption from the lake, I picked my young brothers. Then we fled to Kiwanja. However, we did an accident and my young brothers felt down and took them to the hospital. Then, we did again the trip then we felt like two times. But one of my young sisters was seriously injured, breaking her lips, and thighs. We were in total shock, both physically and psychologically.”*

#### (7) Questions and Concerns of Pastors’ wives

Based on a brief and informal assessment by the trainers, we present the following questions and concerns of pastors’ wives:

*“What should we do when church activities have taken all of your time? Sometimes, we don’t have time for our family to the point that we they ask us in the morning, “mother, are you going again to do your church staff?”*

“We always face a dilemma of trying to do pastoral counselling to women and the desire to do small business.”

“Thank you for the lessons. They are helping us a lot. I am quite amazed by the fact that Abraham is called and he understands the calling and he takes it as his own responsibility. How then can we explain a person who has been called that God has called him for a mission. Someone who does not understand why she has been called; it will be hard for her to be an oasis of hope. Otherwise, the person will be doing things for the sake of doing them. How can we help such a person? (This question comes as reflection on pastors’ wives’ response on the call for their husbands to be relocated to another area of ministry.

## Finances

The CIMR ministry Relief project expenses covered a total amount of \$10,556.15 out of the \$14,712 expected from the fund mobilization toward the relief actions. We are very grateful that our ministry friends and praying partners (individuals and churches-see list on the appendix) were able to give sacrificially at a very particular time when we needed to act and respond to the context of the Nyiragongo volcano eruption in Goma. This amount was distributed to the following key activities:

Activity	Activity Cost (USD)	Budget Planned	Gap	%
1. Feeding costs of volcano displaced families at the CIMR centre and Eraston home during the evacuation and refuge weeks	1365.30	651.10	-714.20	209.69
2. Distribution of Food and non-food to 54 destitute	2084.50	2560.00	475.50	81.43
3. Pastoral care to 54 destitute families	750.00	2250.00	1500.00	33.33
4. Christian leaders' Capacity building workshop on the church response to the effect of the Nyiragongo volcano eruption (Trauma healing, discipleship and holistic ministries)	4053.00	4950.00	897.00	81.88
5. Support to IGA of destitute families (for livelihoods sustainability)	510.00	2500.00	1990.00	20.40
6. Support costs : Support to staff (910), Admin cost (\$ 738.9)	1648.90	1648.90	0.00	100.00
7. Bank transfer and account maintenance fee	144.45	152.00	7.55	95.03
<b>Total</b>	<b>10556.15</b>	<b>14712.00</b>	<b>4862.50</b>	<b>71.75</b>

As per the above tab, the rapid response to care for families that did seek refuge at our ministry center and the director’s home required more financial resources than we ever planned. Families found it secure and safe from earthquakes. It is also good to note that even though the most vulnerable and destitute families were provided with food and non-food, we were only able to distribute 20% of the cash support (to sustain the livelihood of most affected families) due to limited fund. The need is still acute in order to sustain the survival of the beneficiaries to be able to own their families’ subsistence and thus champion change in their community and local church. The tasks that should be continued include: intensifying the pastoral care work through beneficiary churches, and organizing follow-up church leadership capacity building.

## Conclusion

To the Levites sons of Korah who were responsible to offer worship in the temple Asaph tells that “As they (those whose strength are in the Lord) pass through the Valley of Baka (valley of bitterness or suffering and pain), they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools” (Psalms 84:4-6)

If there have been opportunities to call the church to action, the sudden eruption of the Nyiragongo volcano on May 22th, 2021 was one of them. Its lava suddenly covered Mutaho villages and a major part of Buhene neighborhood leaving families homeless and in urgent need of basic livelihoods, care and shelter. Because the Buhene community had experienced an ethnic clash few months before the eruption, there are people who had not benefited from humanitarian help as they were hindered to live in established camp. CIMR ministry response, therefore, bore a holistic character as, in addition to feeding and accommodating families and individuals at the center and in Eraston's home during the two weeks – eruption and earthquakes, the team provided a food kit and a blanket to a group of people which were found still left out (the elderly peoples and widows), provided pastoral care session to all beneficiaries, equipped 73 Christian leaders on the Christian response to the crisis in the midst of a conflict context and lastly, having pointed families to IGA as sustainable way to own their family livelihoods, is accompanying three most affected homeless family toward restoration. Stories of transformations have started being heard from trained leader. The youth leader of CBCA church in Goma recently organized a three-day of Group therapies and other activities for all the youth khlhkhministries of their churches in Buhene.

We are grateful to God for all our ministry friends and supporters whose prayers and gifts allowed our team to be able to serve as an oasis of hope and transformation to most destitute and to the church in order for it to bear its holistic discipleship mandate as it responds to the context around the post volcanic eruption of the Nyiragongo which most affected a community facing ethnic conflicts.

Done in Goma, on August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2021



Dr Eraston Kighoma, PhD  
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Centre for Intercultural Missions and Research

## Centre for Intercultural Missions and Research

Photo Sessions after the trainings: Top (Pastors); Middle (Pastors' wives); Bottom (Youth Leaders)



Few other photos



Dr Eraston (extreme left) and Rev Kahembe (far right) with destitute and homeless family in front of their refuge house: the family uses the lab as kitchen and the reception as dormitory for both parents and kids.



Standing on lava and holding a solid lava stone (Eraston Visiting the Buhene neighbourhood in June 2021)

## Appendix:

Questions the young people asked themselves during and in the post-volcanic eruption



Christian youth leaders during one of the workshops

1. "As the volcano burned the pipes that facilitated our access to water on the north side of the city, I wonder how I will behave in this situation where access to water becomes very difficult when I don't spend the day at home and I return at night."
2. "I wonder why those in power are so negligent to the point of living through a volcanic eruption without any advance warning."
3. "I experienced the volcano very stressful especially; everywhere the things I` experienced: (1) this expression of seeing how much to start life all over again. (2) also, this expression of feeling where I saw people running away, commenting on accidents while running away."
4. "After experiencing the eruption, I was left wondering about the preventive measures of the state in relation to any eventuality of an eruption in order to keep Goma economically attractive."
5. "I wonder if the volcano is not going to erupt again and if the gas that we were told would choke the city is not going to show up anymore or if the situation has already been managed."
6. "I wonder why the volcanoes are in Goma!"
7. "In view of the harmful consequences caused by the eruption of the Nyiragongo volcano on all the plans of the population of Goma; in view of the malignity, the cunning, the corruption that certain leaders present in the distribution of the aids; two questions come back in my mind: (1) What is my Christian responsibility in the transformation of young people to live the Christian values to face these challenges? (2) How can I prepare the youth and the population for future eruptions?"
8. "Why did God allow this to happen? Is God love and if he is love why this?"

9. "My biggest concern during the volcano was what will happen to the city of Goma after the volcano and earthquakes have picked up everything. Will I have the courage to continue living in this city and start all over again? Will all the promises I have about work come true with all that has happened?"
10. "The volcano has ignited in Lake Kivu, precisely in Rwanda. How is it that this fire did not embrace all of Lake Kivu because of the methane gas?"
11. "During the eruption of Nyiragongo, I was wondering how I will survive in the evacuation places. Now my question after this moment is: how to take back my life because a lot of promises related to the work I had have fallen."
12. "Where exactly are those who lost their homes in the volcano eruption living?"
13. "Why can the volcano explode without informing the population? We have the OVG (an organization that observes the volcano and informs the population about the seismic activity of the volcano). After the eruption, the population of Buhene and Monigi is victim; why the government does not help these people?"
14. "The volcano had created in me a disappointment towards my little family, the lack of confidence, and also an unfair spirit of lying especially, the fear follows to the thieves who visited us on Thursday of evacuation."
15. "I who evacuated calmly, passing over the lava in feet until arriving to Kibumba, always in feet. And when I try to share this with my relatives, they laugh at me. What technique or measure should I take to feel comfortable with others?"

## **Appendix: List of donors towards the Goma Volcano Relief –2021**

1. Hardwick Evangelical Church, Cambridge, UK
2. Lindsay Brown and family ( IFES, UK)
3. Gaelle Deperrier and her colleague (Medair, Bunia-DRC)
4. Rev. Mary Mutoko, Kenya
5. Sister Biaba Mutamu and Friends (Congolesse Fellowship)
6. John Allert, CMM
7. Dr Hannes Wiher and family, REMIF-Switzerland
8. Bekha Guess, Tx,USA
9. Trinity Church Oxford, UK
10. CIMR ministry members and friends (from DRC)