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MEDIA RELEASE: Volcanic eruption in DRC leaves trail of destruction

24 May 2021

Thousands of people have fled their homes in the Democratic Republic of Congo after Mount Nyiragongo erupted on Saturday May 22.

The eruption has killed at least 15, and forced 30,000 people to flee from the city of Goma in the North Kivu province. At least 500 houses have been destroyed.

The full extent of the damage is not yet known, but it is expected that there will be widespread electricity and water shortages as people return to their homes.

“We’re concerned not just about the destruction of houses, but also the vulnerable people, such as children and the elderly who were not unaccompanied as the evacuation was so fast,” says Lulu Mitshabu, Caritas Australia’s Program Coordinator for Democratic Republic of Congo.

“Our partners in Goma are still assessing the needs on the ground, but we know that people will need support for clean water, temporary shelters, medical support and food distributions. We’ll also need to support those who have lost their homes.”

The volcano, which is located 10km from Goma, killed 250 people and left 120,000 homeless when it last erupted in 2002.

“This eruption has led to mass displacement for a region that is still reeling from two Ebola outbreaks, ongoing impacts from COVID-19 and many years of conflict,” says Ms. Mitshabu.

“There is already food insecurity, and over five million people are currently displaced from previous disasters and conflict. This latest eruption is yet another challenge for the people of the DRC, and we will need support to make sure that we can reach those in need.”

Caritas Australia works with our partners, CAFOD, Caritas Bukavu and Caritas Goma, to provide support to the most marginalised and vulnerable.

Caritas Australia is accepting donations to help support vulnerable communities in Africa through the Africa Regional Appeal.

Visit caritas.org.au or call 1800 024 413 toll free to provide much needed support.

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Note:

Lulu Mitshabu, Caritas Australia’s Program Coordinator for Democratic Republic of Congo is available for interview.

Katy Nembe Katonda, Quality Program Manager of CAFOD DRC is available for interview from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Bernard Balibuno, Country Director of CAFOD DRC is available for interview from Democratic Republic of Congo.

The Catholic agency for international aid and development

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