

Caring Magazine logo

Goma, Afghan refugees receive SA aid

Salvationists have responded to tragic events in Africa and Pakistan, providing food, shelter, and emotional and spiritual support to victims of war and natural disaster.

The eruption on January 17, 2002 of Mt. Nyiragongo, 12 miles north of the city of Goma (Democratic Republic of Congo), sent waves of molten lava to the city of half a million, razing 30 percent of the town. Forty-five were killed, and 10,000 were left without shelter.

Major Mike Olsen, IHQ Emergency Services, reports: "This is a two-country emergency, as Goma sits just inside the Democratic Republic of Congo, on the border with Rwanda. As a result of the civil conflict in the eastern part of the DRC, nearly all humanitarian efforts are being directed from the Rwanda capital of Kigali, several hours south of Goma. Initially, nearly all those fleeing from the volcano traveled south into Rwanda.

"More than two-thirds of them have now returned to the greater Goma area or to nearby Saki and Masisi in the DRC. Agencies have experienced no difficulties in taking supplies across the border from Rwanda to the DRC.

"The Salvation Army has been consulting with CARE International in Kigali to develop a cooperative response plan to assist 20,000 registered displaced families.

"The Salvation Army in Rwanda has responded initially by helping to provide family household kits to allow families to prepare food, along with basic hygiene and housekeeping.

"IHQ has made \$50,000 immediately available from other disaster funds to allow for the quick purchase of food and household/cooking kits. These will be distributed by Salvation Army personnel in an under-served border area, after coordinating with UNHCR, CARE and other NGOs in the area."

All assistance funded through The Salvation Army will be provided directly by Salvation Army staff and volunteers.

Initial basic assistance will cost an estimated \$250,000. The IHQ consultants will assist the regional office in developing a written plan and budget.

All donated funds should be sent to the **Africa Relief Fund at IHQ** and be marked for the Goma disaster. Funds accountability and reporting will be via the International Emergency Services Section at IHQ.

Afghan refugees in Pakistan

Seeking a safe haven from the fighting, Afghan refugees have poured into neighboring Pakistan, hoping to find food and shelter. The Army is on the scene to help.

The Salvation Army's assistance to Afghan refugees began in early January when Captains Imran Sabir and Nighat Imran, corps officers, arrived in Peshawar. Joining them were project team members Cadets Macdonald Chandi and Diana Macdonald and Pakistan THQ project staff employee, Mr. Mansoor John. The team found that the Army site needed much work before the building would be livable; urgent concerns were the water supply and the sewage system. They went to work.

In mid-January representatives from Pakistan THQ conducted a project-monitoring visit. Attending were Major Gloria Hammond, projects officer, and Mr. Kamran Gill, project field worker.

Since the monitoring visit staff including two cooks and a storekeeper have been hired, and a computer and printer have been purchased. An Afghani man has been hired as caseworker to make contact with the Afghan people now residing in Peshawar.

The team has begun buying food for distribution, which they store on site. They register the refugees and supply those in need with food parcels. Each family receives a parcel containing flour, dahl, sugar, cooking oil, tea, powdered milk, and rice.

Hammond states that the team anticipates a visit from an IHQ representative to evaluate the program and to provide guidance. She says "the team is concerned to use the resources as effectively as possible to help those who are in need and to maintain faith with the donors who have contributed so generously to help the plight of the Afghan refugees."

