



# THE 2002 ERUPTION OF MOUNT NYIRAGONGO



Need A Refresher On Types Of Volcanic Eruptions? No fear, click here...



## Events:

On January 17<sup>th</sup> 2002, after several months of increased seismic and fumarolic activity, the volcano erupted on a large scale.

A 13km large fissure opened, allowing magma to rise through the volcano and out onto the steep hillsides as voluminous lava flows, where they gathered pace, travelling at up to 40 miles per hour, towards the provincial capital of Goma.

Lava streamed through the town towards lake Kivu, prompting fears of contaminants and toxins within the lava irreversibly damaging the ecosystem which the locals were so reliant on as a source of income.



## Useful Links:

Nat Geo Live Minidoc – ‘Inside the Nyiragongo Volcano’

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tllOcrYcG-g>

Online Detailed Explanatory Wiley Resource

<https://agupubs.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1029/2006JB004762>

Interesting Al Jazeera video into ‘the world’s largest lava lake’

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QKgSylaXuDk>

Oregon State University Article On Why Nyiragongo may be “The most dangerous Volcano in the world.”

<http://volcano.oregonstate.edu/most-dangerous-volcano-world-tale-nyiragongo>

Mount Nyiragongo is an active stratovolcano of height 3,470m asl located on the Albertine Rift border between eastern DRC (Democratic People’s Republic Of Congo) and Rwanda, in central Africa, 20km north of the border town Goma. Notably, both countries – although Rwanda has made [significant progress](#) in recent years – are some of the poorest LICs in the world, both engaged in the aftermath of civil unrest.

The area has been volcanically active for many years, with the first recorded activity in 1882, and the volcano having erupted at least 34 times since.

It is well-renowned for possessing at certain times the largest known lava-lake of any active volcano in the world, which contributes to its ferocity when erupting.

## Impacts:

- Est. 250 people lost their lives in the disaster, principally from asphyxiation, with toxic gases present in the air.
- Approximately 5,000 buildings, or 15% of the town of Goma were destroyed.
- Up to 400,000 people were forced to move across the border to overcrowded temporary shelters
- Poisonous gases caused acid rain, which affected farmland and cattle. Many farmers lost income.
- Carbon dioxide levels are still a serious (and possibly deadly) issue known as ‘Mazuku’ in areas where winds do not disperse the released gases.
- One month after the disaster, 350 000 people were still dependent on aid

## Responses:

- Notably, managing the disaster was particularly badly coordinated. Little advanced warning or emergency protocols were in place, and as many LICs, few people had been educated in the dangers of toxic gases.
- 10 aid agencies and NGOs helped out with the relief effort, funding and Rwandan Authorities sent in armed forces to help clear debris.
- The US provided an additional \$7.5 M in direct funding aid to the DRC to help with reconstruction efforts.
- Many locals had to work themselves to support this reconstruction, as the government was notoriously corrupt and little actual aid ended up available.

