

## Key considerations: Ebola preparedness and readiness in Goma, DRC

This brief summarises key considerations about the social, political and economic context of Goma in relation to the outbreak of Ebola in the DRC as of March 2019. Goma is the administrative capital of North Kivu province and a major urban centre in the Great Lakes Region. The city is home to an estimated 1.5 million people and serves as an important economic and transportation hub that links eastern Congo to the broader East African sub-region. The arrival of Ebola in Goma would substantially increase the at-risk population and heighten the potential for cross-border transmission to neighbouring countries, particularly Rwanda. This brief therefore focuses on local social and political structures that can be leveraged to promote preparedness and readiness actions.

The brief is based on a rapid review of existing published and grey literature, personal communication with administrative and health officials in Goma, and lessons learnt from previous Ebola outbreaks. The brief was developed by David Peyton (Northwestern University) with support from Ingrid Gercama and Juliet Bedford (Anthrologica).

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## Key recommendations

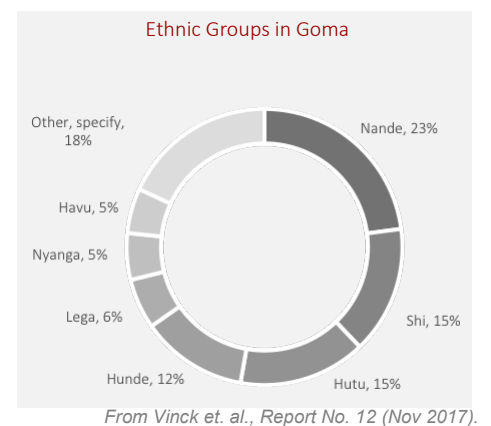
- **Collaborate with local structures:**
  - **Neighbourhood chiefs** are key local-level actors who are regularly solicited by Goma's residents in times of need. Their ability to communicate with their constituents and gather fine-grained information should not be underestimated by the response, particularly in the city's vast resource-poor neighbourhoods. These areas are largely disconnected from humanitarian agencies, and a high level of local knowledge and connections will be required to operate effectively in them.
  - **Religious associations** are among the most trusted organisations in the city and are an important entry point for different communities. Many religious associations provide health services to their congregations and the wider population. Key associations that the response should partner with include the Catholic Diocese of Goma and umbrella Protestant organisations such as the *Eglise du Christ au Congo* (ECC), *Communauté Évangélique au Centre de l'Afrique* (CECA), *Communauté des Eglises Baptistes du Congo* (CEBCE) and *Communauté des Eglises de Pentecôte en Afrique Centrale* (CEPAC).
  - **Baraza Intercommunautaire** is an interethnic organisation headquartered in Goma that derives its legitimacy from customary methods of dispute resolution. It is common for its leaders to comment on matters of public interest, and it would be an influential partner for the response, particularly in relation to communicating key messages about the outbreak and response to city residents.
  - **Société Civile du Nord-Kivu** is an umbrella organisation that maintains direct lines of communication with all civil society organisations in Goma. Its leaders have a high public profile and are well trusted by the city's population. Their ability to communicate and coordinate with a range of civil society organisations should be leveraged by the response.
- **Conduct security planning** – The majority of Goma's population live in neighbourhoods that are distant from areas where humanitarian organisations are headquartered and accustomed to working. Residents in these neighbourhoods report elevated levels of crime and insecurity connected to gangs, street kids (*maibobo*), and undisciplined state security forces. In order to enter and effectively operate in these neighbourhoods, particularly after dark, the Ebola response must work with trusted local interlocutors and develop localised security plans.
- **Continue economic activity** – Goma's population is economically fragile, and day-to-day commercial activities must continue if residents are to meet their livelihood needs. In the current preparedness and readiness phase, communication efforts should seek to reduce the risk of panic and cessation of economic activity should a suspected or confirmed case of Ebola be identified in the city. Partners must be mindful of the impact the response may have on the movement of people and goods, particularly at Points of Control (PoCs) and Points of Entry (PoEs), and mitigate any negative effects on the city's general economy. These efforts should include coordination with Congolese and Rwandan customs officials, particularly regarding movement across the *Petite Barrière*, an important border crossing between Congo and Rwanda running directly through the city of Goma. This crossing is vital to the livelihoods of small-scale cross-border traders in Goma and Gisenyi.
- **Acknowledge competing concerns** – Goma's residents face many livelihood challenges, and may prioritise these over Ebola. Such issues include housing, food security, safety and security, and health challenges such as malaria, typhoid, and cholera. Response partners should acknowledge and not compete with these important and very real concerns. When possible, response actors should demonstrate how Ebola preparedness and prevention activities are well aligned with other challenges and can

contribute to overcoming them (e.g., increased hand washing decreases the risk of typhoid, cholera, and related enteric illnesses, as well as Ebola).

- **Ensure transparent response financing** – Against the backdrop of humanitarian action, the influx of ‘Ebola money’ must be carefully managed. Congolese health workers at PoCs and PoEs have reported non-payment of salaries (in January and February, these workers donned yellow vests and publicly demonstrated to raise awareness about their unpaid wages).<sup>1</sup> Such issues reinforce the perception that Ebola money is directed towards international responders and to a narrow Congolese political and economic elite, rather than being distributed equitably at the local level. This can increase frustration and propel misinformation about the outbreak and response. Further transparency and accountability measures should be put in place, and funds designated for salaries of Congolese workers must be paid on time and in full.
- **Prepare for safe and dignified burials** – It will be necessary to develop a comprehensive plan for safe and dignified burials (SDB) in Goma in collaboration with local authorities. There are three main cemeteries in the city (Kanyamuhanga, Itig and Gabiro) and a cemetery in nearby Nyiragongo territory (Makao), although burial plots are expensive and suitable land is limited due to the area’s volcanic rock surface.<sup>2</sup> The response will need to work with local authorities to develop Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) about the location of burials and how they will be paid for. Many families may prefer to bury their loved ones in villages with which they have ancestral, communal, or symbolic attachments, and the response must integrate a strategy for the safe transportation of the deceased to rural areas into SOPs. These plans must be designed and agreed at the local level and SDB protocols modified to conform to funeral and mourning practices in and around Goma.
- **Leverage communication platforms** – Social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook are used widely by Goma’s residents. Many people own or have access to a Smartphone and 3G service is available via the city’s major cellular carriers: AirTel, Orange, Tigo, and Vodacom (and Rwandan-based MTN for subscribers near the Congo-Rwanda border). Community members continue to suggest that Ebola preparedness messages should be circulated as SMS (Short Message Service) and GIFs (Graphics Interchange Format). In addition, about 75% of Goma’s residents receive their news from radio (above television, journals, and even friends and family).<sup>3</sup> The response must partner with radio stations such as Radio Kivu 1, Radio Pole FM, Mishapi, Sauti ya Injili, Radio Alpha Omega, Virunga Business Radio, and Radio Okapi to communicate key messages about Ebola preparedness, prevention and response, and to establish two-way dialogue (e.g., through radio call-ins).
- **Conduct community engagement in local Swahili** – The lingua franca of Goma is the local form of Congolese Swahili. A recent study by Translators without Borders found that Goma residents, particularly women and the elderly, struggled to understand Ebola response materials in French or standard Swahili. The study concluded that French is a suboptimal language for community engagement, and that local Swahili should be prioritised. Professional translators are available through Translators without Borders, and Congolese research institutes such as the *Centre de Recherche sur la Démocratie et le Développement en Afrique* at the *Université Libre des Pays des Grands Lacs* are available to assist with outreach activities in local Swahili. Please contact Juliet Bedford ([julietbedford@anthrologica.com](mailto:julietbedford@anthrologica.com)) for details.
- **Plan for geological hazards** – Goma is located in a seismically active region, and is 15 km from an active volcano that last erupted in 2002. Contingency plans should be developed for a volcanic eruption or earthquake during the Ebola outbreak. An eruption or earthquake could damage critical health infrastructure and prompt large-scale migration from the city towards Sake (to the west) and across the Congo-Rwanda border (to the east). The response should coordinate with the *Observatoire Volcanologique de Goma* (OVG) to monitor volcano-warning levels as part of Ebola preparedness measures.

## Overview: Goma City

- **Goma** – The city of Goma, once a small colonial outpost, is today a politically and economically important urban centre in eastern Congo. It is home to the offices of the Governor and Provincial Assembly of North Kivu, and has been the site of protest and democracy movements (discussed further below). Goma received widespread international attention when over one million refugees arrived in the city and its surrounding areas in the wake of the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Goma was also a critical site in the rebellions that produced the First and Second Congo Wars (1996-1997 and 1998-2003 respectively), and emerged as a major hub for humanitarian operations. To this day, Goma hosts thousands of expatriate workers from NGOs and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). The city’s population has grown substantially over the past three decades, from c.150,000 inhabitants in the early 1990s to around 1.5 million today, although the exact number of inhabitants remains unknown.<sup>4</sup> Goma’s large population, economic importance, and location along the Congo-Rwanda border make it a critical site for Ebola preparedness measures.
- **Demography** – People from Goma, known as *Goméens* or *Gomatraciens*, constitute one of eastern Congo’s most ethnically diverse urban populations. The city comprises communities of Havu, Hunde, Hutu, Kano, Kumu, Lega (Rega), Mbuti, Nande, Nyanga, Shi, Tembo, and Tutsi residents, in addition to members of smaller ethnic groups from North Kivu and migrants from other regions of Congo (*Compatriotes d’Autres Provinces, or CAP*).<sup>5</sup> This level of diversity is also reflected at the neighbourhood level. In only two of Goma’s 18 neighbourhoods does a single ethnic group constitute more than 50% of the population (these are Mabanga-Nord and Virunga neighbourhoods, where 54% of residents are Nande).<sup>6</sup> Goma’s citizens

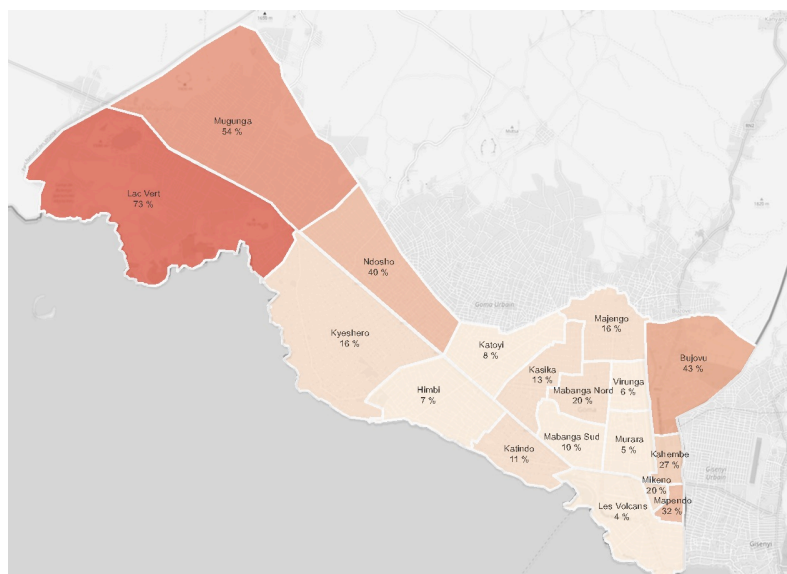


are in regular contact with members of other ethnic groups and maintain generally positive relations. In a survey by the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative (HHI), 69% of respondents in Goma considered their relations with members of their own ethnic group to be good or very good, and 67% of respondents considered their relations with other ethnic groups to be similarly good or very good.<sup>7</sup> However, voluntary, religious, and professional associations may take on ethnic characteristics, and the potential for ethnic differences to influence political developments should not be ignored. Two of the city's largest ethnic communities, the Nande and Banyarwanda, have competed for political and commercial influence in the past, and their relationship may be fragile in future times of political polarisation.<sup>8</sup> Ebola responders should be mindful of lingering sensitivities connected to issue of Banyarwanda citizenship status, identity and social acceptance.

- **Language** – Translators without Borders conducted an initial language and communication assessment in February 2019 to support Ebola preparedness efforts in Goma.<sup>9</sup> Findings indicated that information on Ebola is best understood in the local form of Congolese Swahili (which is different from Tanzanian and Kenyan Swahili). French is only spoken amongst a small proportion of residents who have received formal education and is used in select professional and administrative settings. However, the majority of study participants faced substantial verbal comprehension challenges when presented with information about Ebola in French, particularly women and the elderly. The results for written communication were more mixed, with a 71% comprehension rate for texts in Congolese Swahili and 65% comprehension rate for texts in French. As such, written materials should be translated into both the local form of Congolese Swahili and French but verbal communication in Congolese Swahili should be prioritised over written communication. The report concludes that community engagement materials are not sufficiently available in the local form of Congolese Swahili, and that the response must increase its efforts to recruit team members with the skills needed to translate materials and communicate in locally spoken language(s).
- **1994 refugee crisis and cholera outbreaks** – The mass arrival of Hutu refugees to eastern Congo (then Zaire) in the wake of the 1994 Rwandan genocide serves as an important historical reference point for public health interventions in the city. In July 1994, an outbreak of cholera in Goma resulted in an estimated 12,000 deaths.<sup>10</sup> Burying the dead was highly challenging given the volcanic rock that the city is built on, and 'disposal trucks' were used to collect bodies for internment in chalk-dusted pits.<sup>11</sup> Although Goma's infrastructure has developed substantially since 1994, the historical trauma of the refugee crisis and cholera outbreak should be considered as preparedness measures are undertaken, particularly with regards to safe and dignified burials (SDB). In addition, the city remains almost entirely dependent on Lake Kivu for its water, and smaller outbreaks of cholera have been recurrent.<sup>12</sup> Pollution in Lake Kivu from sewage, garbage disposal and fuel runoff creates additional public health and sanitation challenges that the response should be mindful of when operating in the city.

- **Inflation and economic hardship** – Like residents of other cities in DRC, Goma's population has been hard hit by high rates of inflation and slow GDP growth. The Congolese Franc lost around 35% of its value in 2017 (the local exchange rate or 'street rate' remains highly unfavourable) and economic growth is forecast to remain below 2% into 2020.<sup>13</sup> Goma's populations is vulnerable to these macro-level economic trends. In a series of polls conducted by HHI from 2014 to 2017, 65% of the city's respondents reported monthly household incomes of less than USD 150.<sup>14</sup> Wealth is unevenly distributed across Goma, with higher numbers of residents in the poorest quartile living in the city's western and northern extremities.<sup>15</sup> Given their economic fragility, people in Goma may place daily needs above concerns about Ebola. The response should look for ways to integrate Ebola preparedness measures into complementary livelihood interventions and ensure that commerce continues should Ebola cases be confirmed in the city. The operation of large markets such as the *Marché Central de Virunga*, *Marché Alanine* (also known as *Marché Mama Olive*), and *Marché Kituku* need to continue, although handwashing and awareness measures at these sites must be further reinforced. At the time of writing, it was reported that hand-washing stations were not set-up at all market entrances and some marketgoers appeared unwilling to use the ones that were there.

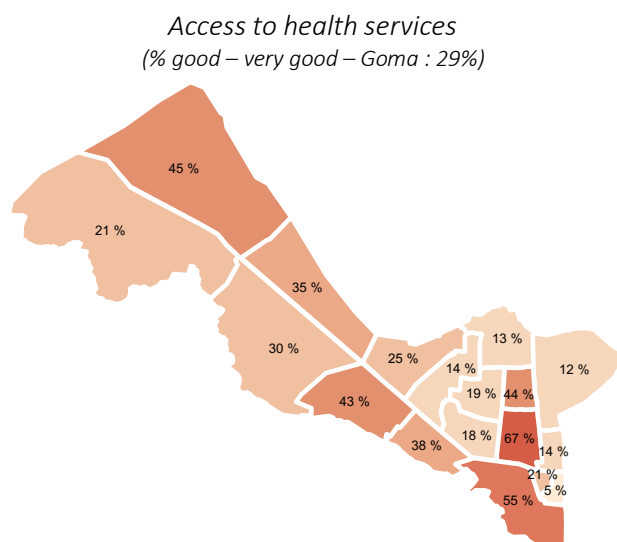
MAP 2: Asset based poverty (% in the poorest quartile – based on possession of non-productive assets) (data from September-October 2017)



From Vinck et. al., Report No. 12 (Nov 2017).

- **Refugee / IDP camps** – Although all neighbourhoods in Goma are potentially at risk of Ebola transmission, areas that formerly housed refugee and Internally Displace Person (IDP) camps are particularly vulnerable. These camps were closed over a period of years, although the neighbourhoods that subsequently emerged retain some of the camp's prior spatial qualities, particularly in terms of the density and informality of settlements in them.<sup>16</sup> The areas in which the Mugunga camps were located continue to have high rates of poverty and low access to health, education and state security services. Residents in these neighbourhoods tend to have weaker social networks because of their histories of displacement, which negatively impacts their ability to cope with crises. Responding to a case of Ebola in one of these densely populated and low-income areas may require additional resources compared to other parts of Goma. Response partners should also anticipate the potential movement of residents from the urban periphery to centrally located areas of the city to seek treatment.

- Protest movements** – Goma has been the site of numerous protests movements, particularly with regards to the security situation in North Kivu and national-level electoral dynamics.<sup>17</sup> Public demonstrations have been organised by a variety of groups, including the Catholic Church and youth-led advocacy groups such as LUCHA (*Lutte pour le Changement*), and local authorities have responded with varying degrees of containment. In a number of cases, the city's security forces have deployed physical force against protestors, and the use of tear gas, beatings, arrests, and killings have been reported.<sup>18</sup> Protestors have also been known to use violence against the state's security forces and their perceived allies.<sup>19</sup> Public demonstrations may be announced in advance or can occur without notice, particularly in the city's central business district, outside MONUSCO installations, and near the campus of the main public university, the *Université de Goma* (UNIGOM). These protests are unpredictable, can substantially disrupt the movement of people throughout the city, and should be avoided. Attention should be paid to alerts issued by security monitoring organisations such as the International NGO Safety Organisation (INSO), and Congolese staff are often well-placed to advise on safe movement around the city. Since the general election took place on 30 December 2018, one of the main opposition coalitions, Lamuka, has organised a series of small protests in Goma and further public demonstrations are possible as elections occur over the coming months (discussed further below).<sup>20</sup> Should protests related to Ebola be conducted in Goma, responders should gather community feedback and address concerns swiftly and in partnership with the provincial Ministry of Health.
- Armed group activity around Goma** – A number of armed groups are active in the territories adjacent to Goma. In 2013, the Congolese military (FARDC) and United Nations Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) successfully repelled the *Mouvement du 23 Mars* (M23), which had briefly occupied the city in 2012. The FIB is a military force attached to MONUSCO, and is authorised to conduct offensive operations to neutralise armed groups. Since 2013, rebel movements have remained outside the city limits, although armed group members retain social and commercial links to and within the city. Although the broader context of insecurity in North Kivu, particularly in the *Grand Nord*, is a persistent backdrop to response operations in the province, security concerns linked to urban criminality and undisciplined state security forces are of greater concern for preparedness measures inside Goma.
- Crime and insecurity** – Survey data collected by HHI in 2017 indicates that neighbourhood-level crime and insecurity (particularly after dark) are priority concerns for the city's population.<sup>21</sup> Goma residents make a point of returning to their homes before nightfall and remain inside or close to their homes until daybreak. Insecurity related to gangs, street kids (known as *maibobo*), and undisciplined police and soldiers has been well documented.<sup>22</sup> In February and March 2019, residents of the city's Mugunga and Ndosho neighbourhoods organised protests in response to a spate of local murders, and expressed heightened concerns about violent crime.<sup>23</sup> It was reported that local authorities have called on residents to monitor their neighbourhoods for 'population movements' in response to these killings, which may contribute to vigilantism and reinforce suspicion of ethnic groups perceived to be outsiders or 'foreigners'. In addition, the Kivu Security Tracker has reported over 100 kidnappings in Goma, Nyiragongo territory, and surrounding areas over the past few years, including the ransom of British tourists in Virunga National Park and the kidnapping of several aid workers.<sup>24</sup> The response must collaborate with local governance structures to agree security plans that enable response partners to operate in Goma's resource-poor neighbourhoods, particularly those that are located far from the city's heavily secured downtown and lakefront areas. In light of the poor reputation of state security forces, neighbourhood protection may be organised by non-state actors such as youth brigades, local alert systems, and 'anti-gangs', occasionally with support from municipal authorities.<sup>25</sup> Responders should also note that MONUSCO's contribution to security in the city is viewed with widespread scepticism by the local population.<sup>26</sup>
- Burial practices in Goma** – There are three main cemeteries in Goma (Kanyamuhanga, Itig and Gabiro) and a cemetery about 10 kilometres north of the city in Nyiragongo territory (Makao). The price of a burial plot around Goma is high due to the shortage of land that can be excavated (because of the area's volcanic surface area) and intense demand for urban real estate. Families may also prefer to bury the deceased at lower costs in rural areas further away.<sup>27</sup> These areas may also be chosen because of ancestral, communal, or symbolic attachments, requiring the deceased to be transported over long distances. The need to move bodies from urban to rural areas should be taken into consideration by the response. It should also be acknowledged that funerals and related mourning practices bring large groups of people together in Goma, occasionally over a period of several days. Mourners commonly gather at the home of the deceased to pay respects to surviving family members, share beverages, and, depending on the wealth of the deceased's family, consume large meals. Mourners may also pass in convoy through Goma's central avenues as the body is transported from one location to another. These activities carry important psychological and cultural significance, although present risks for Ebola transmission. The response should partner with funeral associations, cemetery administrators, and religious authorities to encourage the families of the deceased to adopt mourning activities in line with Ebola prevention strategies and SDB protocols. The *Baraza Intercommunautaire* could act as a valuable partner in this regard, since its leaders have strong connections to the city's cultural associations (*Kyaghanda* for the Nande, *Bushenge* for the Hunde, *Bunakima* for the Nyanga, and *Magrivi* for the Hutu, among others), which can provide guidance to help modify SDB protocols to customary practices.
- Access to health services** – Residents in Goma report uneven access to healthcare by neighbourhood. According to an HHI survey in 2017, the percentage of respondents who reported good or very good rates of access to health services was lowest in Mapendo (5%), and low rates were also reported in Majengo (13%), Bujovu (12%),



*From Vinck et al., Report No. 12 (Nov 2017).*

and Kahembe (14%).<sup>28</sup> Goma's population seeks care from a variety of providers, including traditional healers,<sup>29</sup> neighbourhood clinics, NGO facilities, and major hospitals, including the *Hôpital General de Goma*, HEAL Africa Hospital, and *Hôpital de Kyeshero*. A number of these facilities operate alongside religious organisations (the *Hôpital de Kyeshero*, for example, is affiliated with *Communauté des Eglises de Pentecôte en Afrique Centrale* [CEPAC]), and engagement with religious organisations remains an important component of Ebola prevention and readiness. A variety of pharmacies function across the city, although concerns about cost, availability, and quality of medicines are recurrent. The response should continue to map public and private healthcare facilities in Goma, and pursue avenues of partnership with a range of local-level providers.

- **Geological hazards** – Goma sits along the seismically active East African Rift Zone, and experiences periodic earthquakes. Downtown Goma is located 15 km south of the Nyiragongo volcano and 25 km southeast of the Nyamulagira volcano, both of which remain active. The eruption of Nyiragongo in 2002 destroyed 10-15% of the city's infrastructure, including health facilities such as the HEAL Africa Hospital and *Centre de Santé Mapendo*. The eruption prompted a mass evacuation of the city's population to the west towards Sake and across the Rwandan border to the east, where people spent days and weeks in makeshift tents or without shelter.<sup>30</sup> The *Observatoire Volcanologique de Goma* (OVG) regularly communicates information about volcanic activity and operates a system of color-coded billboards and warning flags across the city. A green flag indicates normal volcanic activity (no danger), yellow increased volcanic activity (activities should continue as usual), orange intense volcanic activity (residents should prepare to evacuate), and red that an eruption is imminent (residents should follow information communicated on the radio and follow evacuation instructions).<sup>31</sup> The emergency response plans prepared for these geological disasters may not be well aligned to Ebola contingency planning, and need to be tailored according to the unique risks faced by the population. It should also be noted that sites along the Lake Kivu shoreline are known to emit carbon dioxide and have been linked to asphyxiation deaths in both humans and animals.<sup>32</sup> These locations are known by the population and can be easily avoided.
- **Perceptions of the Humanitarian Community** – Goma hosts a large and visible humanitarian community, based primarily near the city's downtown in *Les Volcans* and along the lakefront in *Katindo and Himbi* neighbourhoods. The methods and objectives of humanitarian organisations in the city are diverse including religious charities, not-for-profit healthcare providers, microfinance institutions, and UN agencies, among others. Public opinion about specific organisations varies widely and against this multitude of humanitarian responders, public confidence in MONUSCO remains low. In a 2017 poll conducted by HHI, only 14% of Goma residents reported that they trust MONUSCO to ensure security in their neighbourhood, and MONUSCO consistently ranks below the Congolese police (PNC) and military (FARDC) in measures of trustworthiness.<sup>33</sup> UN compounds have been the sites of public demonstration, and protestors in Goma have thrown stones at MONUSCO buildings, vehicles, and staff.<sup>34</sup> In light of real and perceived security concerns, humanitarian workers tend to be 'bunkerised', living and working in highly guarded compounds that increase the local perception that they are separated from the population.<sup>35</sup> Scepticism about the humanitarian community has increased with Ebola's arrival to North Kivu, largely because of views about the misallocation of Ebola funding and the flow of Ebola money. A common perception among Goma residents is that the Ebola response is present for the exclusive purpose of enriching foreigners and Congolese elites. Response partners should hire local staff whenever possible, since these actors are more likely to be trusted by local communities and their employment will contribute to the city's economy. Recruiting local staff should occur through a transparent process and include candidates from a cross-section of Goma's population. In addition, team members should avoid reinforcing the large and visible financial gap between humanitarian workers and the urban poor and refrain from displaying signs of wealth such as large vehicles, electronic devices, and related equipment.

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## Transportation and entry points

- **Domestic overland routes** – Overland traffic arrives in Goma daily from the *Route Nationale 4*, which runs through Nyiragongo, Rutshuru and Lubero territories. This overland traffic includes transport trucks, small buses (*mini-bus*), private cars and motorbikes. The roads traversing the territories north of Goma are poorly maintained, and reaching the city can take several days depending on conditions. In addition, vehicles using the northern roads are subject to fees imposed by both state and non-state actors, and theft, kidnappings, and armed group activity are common.<sup>36</sup> Convoys of travellers depart from Butembo twice per day and may employ military escorts to mitigate security risks. However, travellers from the *Grand Nord* (the northern half of North Kivu that is the epicentre of the current Ebola crisis) may avoid domestic routes entirely, and instead arrive in Goma via paved roads from Uganda and Rwanda. At the time of writing (March 2019), this international route was complicated by intermittent closures along the Uganda-Rwanda border due to diplomatic disputes.<sup>37</sup> This may lead Congolese travellers coming from Ebola-affected areas to opt for domestic routes to Goma, and monitoring travellers at PoCs along the *Route Nationale 4* is therefore crucial. Substantial traffic also arrives in Goma via the city of Sake, situated approximately 20km to the northwest in Masisi territory (the road from Sake has served as a major thoroughfare for the arrival of IDPs from Masisi territory to Goma). Sake residents have close social and economic ties to Goma, and the response should take into consideration the risk of transmission to and from this secondary urban area. Taxi and bus drivers who work on the road between the *Grand Nord* and Goma should be engaged by response activities. They have the potential to play a key role in disseminating information, adopting and encouraging correct preventative behaviours, and could serve as an early warning mechanism for reporting signs and symptoms.
- **Lake Kivu traffic** – Goma is a port city that is linked to destinations on Idjwi Island and Bukavu, a city with an estimated population of over one million people that is the capital of South Kivu province. The large passenger boats that connect Goma to Bukavu can carry around 300 passengers, and depart multiple times per day.<sup>38</sup> The arrival of Ebola in Goma would substantially increase the potential for rapid transmission to Bukavu, which sits along the Congo-Rwanda border and is the site of substantial cross-border trade with the Rwandan city of Cyangugu.

- **Air Travel** – Goma has an international airport with direct flights throughout East Africa that connect to Europe, the Middle East, and beyond. There are also domestic flights to large urban centres including Kinshasa, Kisangani, Lubumbashi, and others. In addition, air carriers such as the *Compagnie Africaine d'Aviation* (CAA), Busy Bee, UNHAS, and MONUSCO operate daily flights to Beni and Butembo. Due to the active Ebola outbreak in these areas, passengers should undergo routine screening upon arrival, and readiness measures are in place for the identification of Ebola cases at the airport.
- **Border Crossings** – Goma shares a border with the Rwandan city of Gisenyi, and thousands of people cross each day. The *Grande Barrière* and *Petite Barrière* are critical Points of Entry, and Ebola prevention measures at these sites should be tested and reinforced. (A separate SSHAP brief on cross-border dynamics between DRC and Rwanda is forthcoming.)<sup>39</sup>

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## Leveraging Goma's voluntary associations

Goma is home to a dynamic landscape of voluntary associations that can serve as valuable partners in Ebola preparation measures.

- **Religious organisations** – Religious participation is an important aspect of daily life for Goma residents. According to HHI's surveys, 44% of the population identifies as Protestant, 37% as Catholic, 5% as Adventist, and 5% as Muslim.<sup>40</sup> Goma residents report high rates of participation in religious activities in addition to weekly services, frequently joining choirs, religious study groups and retreats. Religious authorities and networks are trusted, and should be approached as key response partners for communicating with the city's population.
- **Cultural associations** – Goma is a multi-ethnic and cosmopolitan urban centre. A number of the city's ethnic groups are organised into ethnic associations, known as *mutualités*, that promote cultural preservation activities, conduct political advocacy, and connect members with educational and employment opportunities. An umbrella organisation for these *mutualités*, the *Baraza la Wazee Intercommunautaire de Nord Kivu*, is headquartered in Goma and should be an important partner for the response. The *Baraza la Wazee*, which translates as 'veranda of the wise' (or elders) was created to resolve disputes between North Kivu's ethnic communities, and bases its dispute mediation approach on histories of customary authority and tradition.<sup>41</sup> The organisation's delegates and president are well-known figures, and provide commentary about political issues through radio broadcasts and at public forums. Like other public figures, leaders of the cultural associations (*mutualités*) that participate in the *Baraza Intercommunautaire* may have complex political affiliations and histories of involvement in controversial decisions. The *Baraza Intercommunautaire* is nevertheless a well-regarded umbrella organisation that can provide feedback for navigating delicate cultural issues and can effectively communicate with Goma's diverse population.
- **Société Civile du Nord-Kivu** – Goma is home to a plethora of civil society organisations that are engaged in economic development activities, political advocacy, and diverse forms of community organisation. While they range in size and resources, all are registered with an umbrella organisation known as the *Société Civile du Nord-Kivu*. This organisation exists to promote coordination amongst its members and to lobby the Congolese state on their behalf. The leadership of the *Société Civile du Nord-Kivu* meet regularly to discuss the city's political issues and provide commentary in local media, particularly on the radio. They are also a key point of access to organisations that provide services to and mobilise women, who have experienced higher rates of Ebola infection than men in the current outbreak.<sup>42</sup> In the context of eastern Congo, women often serve as caregivers for the sick, are responsible for taking family members to clinics and hospitals, and are involved in preparing bodies for burial, all of which expose them to increased risk of infection.<sup>43</sup> The role of gender must be taken into account at all stages of Ebola planning and readiness measures, and local organisations should be identified to assist in this task. The *Société Civile du Nord-Kivu* is well-placed to facilitate these activities and should be consulted as a key response partner.
- **Fédération des Entreprises du Congo/Nord-Kivu** – A vibrant chapter of the Congolese Chamber of Commerce, the *Fédération des Entreprises du Congo* (FEC), is active in Goma. Much of the city's political and economic life is connected to its members who can influence decisions about land use, investments in infrastructure, and the movement of goods and services.<sup>44</sup> The arrival of Ebola in Goma would negatively impact FEC members' commercial activities by disrupting supply chains and consumption patterns (although it should be noted that the arrival of additional humanitarian workers in times of crisis has previously benefited certain sectors of Goma's economy and its business community).<sup>45</sup> Discussing the financial ramifications of Ebola with FEC members may bring their influence to bear on preparedness measures. The FEC's elite members are known figures and communicate regularly with the population through announcements, public events, and patronage (giving gifts to community members). The FEC should be engaged to ensure that economic activities and commerce continue.
- **Congolese academic institutions** – Congolese research and academic institutions are important response partners and can make significant contributions across a range of preparedness and response measures. The *Université Libre des Pays des Grands Lacs* (ULPGL) maintains a large school of public health and operates an active research institute, the *Centre de Recherche sur la Démocratie et le Développement en Afrique* (CREDDA).<sup>46</sup> The Pole Institute also conducts research and hosts a radio broadcast followed by a large audience. These institutions are led by Congolese researchers with deep knowledge of Goma's social and cultural context. Working with them will mitigate issues of 'the outsider', root the response in established structures, and build local capacity to deal with this and future outbreaks. For further information about partnering with these Congolese academic institutions, please contact Juliet Bedford ([julietbedford@anthrologica.com](mailto:julietbedford@anthrologica.com)).
- **Youth and the arts** – Goma is home to vibrant youth and arts organisations that can serve as communication partners for the response. Youth-centred programmes such as the Congo Peace Network (CPN) provide civic education activities to young people that can be leveraged to convey Ebola-related messages.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, organisations such as Yole!Africa, *le Foyer Culturel de Goma*, and Rinha Dance Projects are connected to an active network of musicians, performers, and artists that should be

integrated into response activities.<sup>48</sup> Soliciting advice from and involving Goma's youth will be critical to crafting Ebola messages that are contemporary and promote acceptance of Ebola readiness measures among the city's large and dynamic youth population.

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## Partnering with the Municipal State

- **Political backdrop** – The political context in eastern Congo is often described as one of 'state weakness'. This may be true in the sense that the Congolese government struggles to provide public health and education services, yet the state is highly active in many domains of daily life. State presence is particularly evident at the municipal level, where a multitude of officials perform functions that overlap with Ebola preparedness measures. The following section provides descriptions of these local state functionaries and offers recommendations for engaging them. Responders should note that local and provincial elections are scheduled over the coming months, which could result in leadership changes for positions outlined below. The elections may heighten political tensions in Goma, and response teams should prepare for the risk of further politicisation of the Ebola outbreak and response. Responders should also prepare for the possibility that well-connected political figures in the city may seek to interface with the response in ways that benefit them financially or politically (e.g., directing payments and response positions to their supporters). The perceived ability of social and political elites to profit from the Ebola outbreak has fuelled pockets of resistance to the response around Beni and Butembo, and similar concerns should be monitored closely in Goma.
- **Mayor's Office** – The Mayor of Goma, Timothée Muissa Kiense, was appointed by the National Minister of the Interior and Security and is affiliated with the political coalition of the outgoing president, Joseph Kabila.<sup>49</sup> The mayor's office retains a large staff and presides over a host of local functions, including sanitation and public works. A key responsibility of the mayor is to coordinate with the city's neighbourhood chiefs.
- **Neighbourhood Chiefs** – Goma has 18 neighbourhoods, and each has its own chief. Neighbourhood chiefs (*chefs de quartier*) are important partners for local-level response efforts in resource-poor neighbourhoods, and are well placed to provide access and information. They are appointed by the Mayor of Goma, creating a vertical link between the central state and neighbourhood levels of governance. According to a poll conducted by HHI in 2017, Neighbourhood Chiefs are the most frequently consulted actors when Goma's residents experience conflicts, ranking higher than justice officials, neighbours, friends, and even family members.<sup>50</sup> Neighbourhood Chiefs in Goma communicate with residents via lower levels of bureaucratic authority: Cell Chiefs (*Chefs de Cellules*), then Avenue Chiefs (*Chefs d'Avenues*), and finally the *Nyumba Kumi* (Chiefs of 10 Households), the lowest level of municipal authority. Neighbourhood Chiefs monitor their areas of authority closely and collect detailed information about crime, land use, and population growth that is relayed to higher levels of the city administration. Neighbourhood Chiefs also conduct weekly meetings with Cell Chiefs and Avenue Chiefs to discuss security matters. These meetings provide an opportunity to reach neighbourhood administrators with information about Ebola and to resolve potential security problems that might arise related to Ebola activities. Some Neighbourhood Chiefs have secondary jobs, but most earn their entire living through fees and commissions received in exchange for carrying out neighbourhood-level administrative functions (signing land sale agreements, resolving boundary disputes, etc.). Responders should note that the reputation of Neighbourhood Chiefs may vary, with some being popular figures and others viewed less favourably, particularly if they are known for extracting high fees from their constituents or for making controversial decisions on topics of public concern. These reputational factors should be navigated by the response by using inputs from Congolese staff and direct feedback from residents. International organisations should also note that Neighbourhood Chiefs and lower levels of the neighbourhood administration are likely to require some financial support (transportation budgets, phone credit, per diems) to communicate effectively with and gather information from their communities. Any payments to Neighbourhood Chiefs or their staff members should be made with the approval of the Mayor's office, fixed to specific tasks, and made in a transparent and accountable manner. When possible, payments should be as localised as possible to avoid the perception that Ebola funds are received exclusively by political elites and/or expatriates.
- **Bourgmestres de Commune** – The city of Goma is divided into two communes, the Commune of Goma to the south and Commune of Karisimbi to the north. Each commune is directed by a *Bourgmestre* and *Bourgmestre Adjoint*. These city-level officials were appointed by the outgoing president and his Minister of the Interior, and are responsible for a host of municipal functions, including making decisions about land use, organising public work days known as *Salongo*, presiding over civil wedding ceremonies, coordinating with law enforcement, etc. The day-to-day functions of *Bourgmestres* make them well known throughout the community and they are often trusted public figures. As important actors in the municipal government, *Bourgmestres de Commune* should be consulted as Ebola preparedness measures are carried out in Goma.
- **Provincial Government** – The presence of the provincial government in Goma, located in a series of buildings known as *le Musée*, provides opportunities for rapid communication and coordination with lower levels of municipal authority. North Kivu is undergoing provincial-level leadership changes that could prove salient to response efforts. On 21 February 2019, the longtime governor of North Kivu, Julien Paluku, resigned from office, and the governorship is now held by Feler Lutahishilwa, who is likely to serve in an interim capacity until a new governor is selected by the North Kivu provincial assembly, which is scheduled to occur on 30 May 2019.<sup>51</sup> Lutahishilwa is a member of the People's Party for Reconstruction and Democracy (PPRD), the party of the outgoing president, Joseph Kabila. It is critical that the response fosters a positive working relationship with the provincial government, whilst recognising the potentially sensitive nature of the upcoming elections and transfers of power between outgoing and incoming administrative officials. In light of the politically charged environment, response partners should be careful not to appear to be endorsing particular politicians and/or their political parties.
- **Nyiragongo Territory** – The city of Goma has experienced rapid population growth and geographic spread over the past two decades. As the city has expanded, the built-up areas of its northern periphery have extended into Nyiragongo territory, where

administrative authority falls under the *Chefferie de Bukumu* (the Chiefdom of Bukumu).<sup>52</sup> The *Chefferie de Bukumu* is an *Entité Territoriale Décentralisée* (Decentralized Territorial Entity [ETD]), and is headed by a customary authority who governs through a concomitant series of appointed administrators, notably a *Secrétaire Administratif* (Executive Secretary), *Mandataire du Budget* (Budget Director), and other functionaries.<sup>53</sup> The expansion of Goma's urban environment into Nyiragongo has created confusion about the city's formal limits and the authorities that hold rightful governing responsibilities in specific locations. Coordinating with provincial-level authorities will help to clarify channels of authority across the city and territorial administration. It should also be noted that the *Chefferie de Bukumu* recently underwent a lengthy inter-family dispute over the rightful succession of the area's customary chief. In early 2018, the Minister of the Interior and North Kivu provincial government named a new customary chief, although sensitivities surrounding the succession continue to linger.<sup>54</sup>

- **Navigating state overlap and reputational factors** – The authority of municipal offices may overlap and competition between state officials is not uncommon, particularly in relation to the availability and use of public resources.<sup>55</sup> Response partners should take care to avoid rather than create competitive situations, and, when possible, seek the advice of the provincial-level Ministry of Health to ensure that interactions with municipal officials do not generate unintended consequences. Responders should also note that partnering with the municipal state implies interacting with officials who have differing levels of popularity and varied reputations, particularly with regards to the fees and commissions that they demand from Goma's residents. The response should leverage the communication and information gathering capacity of local officials, whilst maintaining distance from any controversial decisions or reputational issues that may be associated with them. On the whole, engagement with the municipal state presents benefits to Ebola preparedness and readiness, although this engagement must be conducted carefully and with constant feedback from local Congolese staff and Goma residents.
- **Elections** – In November 2017, *la Commission Electorale Nationale Indépendante* (National Independent Electoral Commission [CENI]) released a much anticipated timetable for a series of elections to be conducted from December 2018 to January 2020.<sup>56</sup> The vote for provincial and national deputies in Beni city, Beni territory, and Butembo is scheduled for 31 March 2019. This vote was supposed to occur on 30 December 2018, but was delayed ostensibly because of insecurity and the Ebola outbreak in the *Grand Nord*. Once Beni (city and territory) and Butembo have voted for provincial deputies, North Kivu will have a complete provincial assembly and be in a position to select a new governor, vice-governor, and the province's four national senators (these positions are voted for by the provincial assembly, not directly by the population).<sup>57</sup> According to a revised electoral timetable created for North Kivu and Mai Ndombe (a province in the central West of the country where general elections were also delayed due to outbursts of violence prior to the elections), new governors and vice governors will be selected on 30 May 2019 (although the rest of the country will select their provincial governors and vice governors at the end of March 2019). If elections move forward as scheduled, then residents of Goma will cast votes for *Conseillers Communaux* (Communal Council Members) in September 2019 and *Conseillers Urbains* (City Council members) in December 2019. These local-level councils are being set-up for the first time, and are key components of a vast decentralisation plan set forth in the 2006 Constitution. Once established, communal councils are scheduled to appoint *Bourgmestres de Commune* in December 2019 and city councils are set to choose Mayors in January 2020. The selection of these local-level officials through a democratic process, as opposed to their direct appointment by the President and the National Minister of the Interior in Kinshasa, could represent a substantial shift in the distribution of local power and its relationship to the central state. The Ebola response should note that although election calendars have been widely disseminated, the dates of these votes could change. In addition, the campaigns preceding the elections will likely include public gatherings and demonstrations in support of candidates, particularly in urban areas such as Goma. As the campaigns are carried out, responders should remain alert for any politicisation of the Ebola outbreak and response, and adhere to a strict policy of political neutrality. Similarly, it should be noted that Goma has been divided between so-called 'autochthones' and 'foreigners' in the past (particularly with regards to its Banyarwanda community), and the potential for insider-outsider tensions to crystallise as elections approach should be monitored.

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## Contacts

If you have a direct request concerning the response to Ebola in the DRC, SSHAP briefs, tools, additional technical expertise or remote analysis, or should you like to be considered for the network of advisers, please contact us.

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