

## **GOMA VISION CONFERENCE REPORT**



**Goma** is a city in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, on the northern shore of Lake Kivu, next to the Rwandan city of Gisenyi. The lake and the two cities are in the western branch of the Great Rift Valley, and Goma lies only 13 to 18 km (8-11 mi) due south of the crater of the active Nyiragongo Volcano.

In January 2002, Nyiragongo erupted, sending a stream of lava 200 meters (219 yds) to one kilometer (1,100 yd) wide and up to two meters (6½ ft) deep through the center of the city as far as the lake shore. Agencies monitoring the volcano were able to give a

warning and most of the population of Goma evacuated to Gisenyi. The lava destroyed 40% of the city (more than 4,500 houses and buildings). There were some fatalities caused by the lava and by emissions of carbon dioxide, which causes asphyxiation. The lava also covered over the northern 1 km of the 3-kilometre (10,000 ft) runway of Goma International Airport, isolating the terminal and apron which were at that end

The population of Goma in 2004 was 249,862 but because of constant influx of refugees, the population may have doubled.

### **Goma in political crisis in Democratic Republic of Congo**

Since 1996 during the Kabila civil war to liberate Zaire from the dictatorship of Mobutu, the town of Goma has little times of peace. There are attacks all around the town and many people from the countryside flee to Goma. That makes people to continue living in starvation. During the Vision Conference, there were rebel attacks 30 kilometers from the town.

### **Vision Conference dates and venue**

The Vision Conference was held from September 8 in the morning to September 11 in the afternoon in the meeting hall of the Council of Protestant churches of Congo.

### **Hosting organization**

The Conference was hosted by the Council of Protestant churches. The Council of Protestant churches is the biggest umbrella of churches in Congo.

### **Participants and attendance**

66 participants registered during the Vision Conference but the average attendance hasn't exceeded 50 people per day. We assumed that the security issue was the obstacle for people to attend as per our expectation.



## **Impression of participants during the Vision Conference**

People were very excited about the materials. Rev. Mahuku, the Legal Representative of the Baptist Community Church in Central Africa and Vice president of the Council of Protestant churches, an old man who is in his sixties and experienced pastor in his Masters degree of Theology said as follows: *“I did universities but no one taught me what I have learned this week. Another thing I learned this week was that I still need training because I just know a little... We can't liberate our people from dependency and poverty without learning these materials. We were told that we will have to suffer in the world and we have accepted that as truth to be believed... Thank you facilitators! We have done a part of what we have to do. I invite you to come back for a Training of Trainers...”*

## **Seed Project**

After the training, we came to the application part of the teaching. During the training, pastors were realizing that they have the responsibility of stewardship of the environment. As the town of Goma is very dirty due to the volcano eruption as well as the careless habit of people leaving trash every where on the roads, vision conference participants planned to clean the town of Goma.

A general meeting will be held on September 22, 2008. Pastor Menhe, the provincial representative and former legal representative of the Pentecostal church in Central Africa will be the speaker for the day. He will train pastors on Creation stewardship. After the teaching, pastors will bring the message to their respective churches. On September 22, a joint planning for the seed project will be done.

## **Photos of participants**

