



HANDS AT WORK IN AFRICA

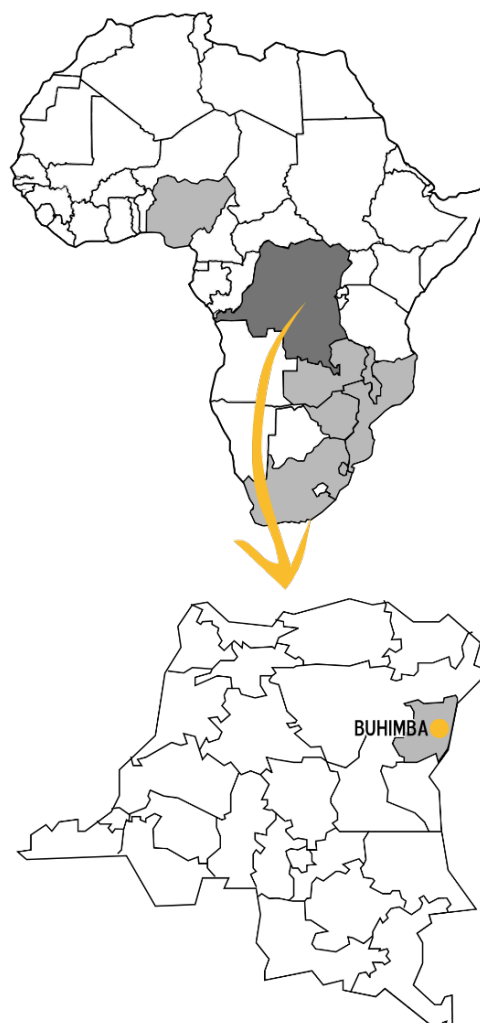
BUHIMBA COMMUNITY

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO | GOMA REGION

Goma is located in the North-East of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), bordering Rwanda. Goma is an area characterised by instability where rebel groups have consistently launched attacks. Its recent history has been dominated by the Rwandan genocide in 1994, the aftermath of which saw a huge number of people fleeing and settling in the DRC, as well as the environmental destruction caused by an active volcano, Nyiragongo.

The majority of the people living around the villages outside Goma are refugees from other communities who fled the ongoing armed conflict. Food security is a daily battle, made worse by recent drought and food price spikes in neighbouring East African countries. Families traditionally feed themselves by growing their own food, however, families living as refugees have no access to land, and when they informally plant fields, the harvests are regularly raided by rebels in the region. A large portion of the land, normally used for agriculture, is unable to be used because of frequent volcanic activity. The gases released from the volcano are filled with unhealthy toxins, resulting in a growing number of illnesses. It is in this region where the community of Buhimba lies.

Buhimba is located on the outskirts of Goma city and consists mainly of displaced people from the ongoing war in this region. The church in Buhimba is very weak and consists mostly of grandmothers, widows and orphans. In the Buhimba Community, many children suffer and die from malnutrition and preventable diseases like malaria. There is government support in Buhimba but it is unable to effectively and sufficiently care for the most vulnerable due to the number of people urgently needing access to health care on a consistent basis.



Unemployment in Buhimba is very high, which results in women walking into the mountains to find wood to sell in the local market. However, journeys like these are dangerous for women. Often, women are exposed to abuse by either the rebel forces or government soldiers.

There is also a high rate of child labour, which can be seen in and around Buhimba, and children work extremely hard just to survive.

Buhimba Community was identified as extremely vulnerable when leaders

HANDS AT WORK IN AFRICA | BUHIMBA COMMUNITY DRC

of Hands at Work visited and began to serve alongside local grandmothers who were fighting for the survival of the most vulnerable in their community. Since starting in 2013, there are 10

Care Workers from the Buhimba Community Based Organisation (CBO) who initially cared for 40 children but have since increased to 120 children being cared for.

Initially, the Buhimba CBO was being operated out of the temporary structures of a local church. However, this exposed the Care Point, in the context of desperate hunger, to the theft of food that was insufficiently stored. In response, a vacant church building was rented by Hands at Work. The local Hands at Work team in Goma partnered with a local organisation 'Blessed Aid' and set to work constructing a storage room, cooking shelter and a shelter under which children could gather and eat. Toilet facilities were also constructed onsite to ensure proper hygiene and avoid the region's rampant cholera outbreaks.

In 2020, new land was rented for the Care Point which has been a huge answer to prayer. It has been a long battle to find a safe and secure place for the children and Care Workers.

When the children come to the Care Point, they are able to participate in activities like youth groups, Bible studies and opportunities for play. These children are known by name by the local Care Workers who help the children understand they have a Heavenly Father who also knows them by name. The Care Workers in Buhimba are continuing to grow with support from the Goma team, not only in their understanding of Jesus and the Bible, but practically in how they care for the most vulnerable children in their communities. As they learn about the processes involved in food purchases, health care facilitation, home repairs and education needs, they are strengthening their unity with one another and able to go deeper in caring for the children.



Children Currently Supported **120**
Number of Care Workers **12**
Coordinator Name **Honorina**
Distance from Local Office **34km**
Basic Services Started In **2013**