1. Executive Summary

1.1 Against a backdrop of chronic conflict and large-scale humanitarian needs throughout eastern DRC, in January 2002 Mount Nyiragongo near Goma on the Congolese / Rwandan border erupted. Between 300,000 and 500,000 people evacuated the town, and though some remained for a short period of time at camp locations inside Rwanda, the majority quickly returned to the damaged town and set about trying to re-establish homes and restore livelihoods.

1.2 SCUK, well positioned to act through its existing programmes in both DRC and Rwanda, responded with work including child protection, health, food and non-food assistance, camp management, and livelihood support through rehabilitation activities. Total income of around £1m was secured from a variety of sources for the emergency response, with the programme implementation largely completed within a six-month period through to July 2002.

1.3 This evaluation, undertaken at the request of programme management, finds the emergency intervention to have been generally robust. Overall programme design correlated closely to the areas of major impact of the eruption on the affected population, with activities ranging from those to mitigate against further risks to physical integrity, through to support for livelihoods recovery. Of particular note are the timeliness of response and practical manifestations of a commitment to effective co-ordination within the wider institutional environment. SCUK was amongst the first organisations to respond both in Rwanda and Goma town, and on each side of the border demonstrated leadership in promoting and contributing to broadly successful collaborative efforts involving a variety of institutions.

1.4 The SCUK response can be seen as generally appropriate to pre-existing programme competencies, and includes important examples of creative advocacy work. The response was underpinned by instances of timely support from other programmes within the region, namely the Burundi programme which was able to deploy human and material resources to the affected areas, and the South Sudan programme support office in Nairobi, which contributed through its efficient procurement capability. Featuring throughout the evaluation is SCUK’s post-first-phase research into household economies within Goma town, which led to the development of cash-for-work rehabilitation initiatives. While this component of the work remains to be fully evaluated by a technical team, it represents an innovative attempt to promote developmental solutions based on an enhanced understanding of household conditions.

1.5 The evaluation highlights some areas for strengthening in anticipation of future emergency responses. While there is a body of circumstantial evidence that programme activities have contributed to broader objectives, there is little evidence of the practice of systematic monitoring or the use of indicators in order to substantiate outcomes. In addition, concerns are raised with regard to financial monitoring and management, including one particular case of failure to properly communicate donor timeframes and operating formats. This is seen to contribute to an under-usage of resources, to the detriment of the affected population. Similarly, the decision to retain in storage a large quantity of relief items procured specifically for the volcano-affected population is questioned, both in terms of continuing needs on the ground and accountability towards donors.

1.6 Special credit should be given to the efforts of all those involved in the light of the generalised evacuation from Goma, which personally affected SCUK staff and their
families. The fact that first phase response operations continued successfully in spite of the displacement of staff and the loss of programme infrastructure should be recognised. These events have, however, highlighted the need for enhanced maintenance and dissemination of evacuation contingencies.

1.7 A review of pre-existing emergency preparedness planning and its relevance to the response also highlights areas for renewed efforts. The report concludes with a short discussion around the implications of future programme closures for response to sudden onset emergencies, and suggests areas for consideration within regional preparedness frameworks.