

PYGMY REPORT - DECEMBRE 2024-JANUARY 2025

(Way Alege)

The process of grounding Christianity in the Pygmy context

Moving from celebrating Christmas as a routine to explaining to Pygmies the significance and purpose of Jesus' birth, as God, who came in human form to dwell among us and in our hearts, is a long journey for them to gain understanding. This journey is the process of transformation to which we are called, a calling full of exciting and challenging moments. All blended together, gives meaning to our daily activities.

For instance, the end of 2024 was full of exciting moments. The Pygmies who are related to those from Ataloholu came and celebrated with their relatives in Komanda. The site was full of noise as everyone knew that it was a time of renewed fellowship.



Parents had helped prepare their children to rehearse joyful songs to celebrate at Christmas. The remarkable aspect is that discrimination was out of the minds of these little souls. Both the Pygmies and non-Pygmies came together as one body to sing at the church. It was most exciting seeing this unity that binds them together.

As usual, **Robert** prepared and delivered the sermon on Christmas. This time, not only with the Pygmies from Ataloholu, but with those from neighbouring camps. Despite the fact that they are



from different clans, the school and the church are drawing them together. It is always difficult for the Pygmies from Ataloholu to comprehend that we are there to serve every Pygmy. They still remain possessive and are ready to reject any other Pygmy that has no blood or marriage ties with them. It is only through education and church activities that we can break this attitude.

It was a joyfull moment as Robert was surrounded for pictures after church service. The ties Robert has built with the communities are strong as the Pygmies and other communities have accepted him as theirs. This encourages us in the ministry and we rejoice and give thanks to God for working in their hearts.

Fellowship meal

The nurse below on right assisted by one of the children's carers, helped to cook a communal meal on the occasion. Meals were served to groups according to ages. Before taking their meal, the children gave thanks to God on their own initiative. This never used to happen in the past. At least, now they have understood that God is the provider.



Christmas joy turns to mourning

The joy of Christmas did not last beyond 25th as on the 26th of December, **Robert** was informed of the death of a Pygmy in one of the camps whose members attended the Christmas service.

In many cases, when a Pygmy dies, nobody tends to pay much attention. This is where our staff have excelled in the ministry. Being close to the Pygmies in good and bad times speaks louder than words. Robert always takes such key moments to preach the gospel while other members of staff take care of burrial arrangements. This is when our motorbike fulfills perfectly the logistics as it serves both as an ambulance and a hearse.



Coming home

After one month of suffering from severe pneumonia, **Shalom** was able to return to Komanda. It all started as a mild pain in the lower chest, followed by a dry cough and then loss of breath. He didn't know that spending nights camping in the forest and in a house with holes in the walls not properly fixed would inflict some illness in his body. The first doctor whom he visited in Komanda failed to give a proper diagnosis, therefore administering a wrong treatment.



We had encouraged Shalom to come to Bunia for the proper follow-up for which he finally agreed. It took some time for test but doctors finally concluded Shalom had pneumonia and so the correct medication was prescribed. Having responded to the treatment and feeling stronger, Shalom felt well enough to return to Komanda where he was joyously welcomed home.

While in Bunia, Shalom was able to share information about his ministry. Some friends offered gifts that he took to some Pygmies. The

couple **Apomu** and **Marcelina** received the best gift for their exemplary life among other Pygmies. **Marcelina** on the right and left holding a baby, lost her first husband who was the older brother to Apomu, next to her. As the levirate marriage is still practiced among the Pygmies, Marcelina got



married to Apomu. The outstanding character of Marcelina seen through her love for God, care for orphans and her children, courage in sending children to school and hard work, all summed together, always draws our attention to her. In our January-February 2024 report, we mentioned that Marcelina likes taking bible studies with Robert. (in above photo)



Shalom was able to spend five full days on the field visiting the Pygmies who have moved closer to Ataloholu. For instance, **Ajoint** and his wife have moved to some distance that can allow them to go and work at Ataloholu in daytime and then spend the night where there is safety. Ajoint and Apomu are the first Pygmies in Ataloholu who own cacao farms. Their mind is always back in Ataloholu despite the uncertain security. It is the same for other Pygmies who are always tempted to go back to their former villages.

So far, we believe that this is an encouraging sign. However, without proper follow-up, we

are receiving a lot of allegations of thefts. Even if other displaced people are also stealing farm produce, all the reports are filed in the name of the Pygmies. In this case, we are taken to be responsible for what is happening even if we do not know where it happened and who are the Pygmies.

This is why **Shalom** and **Maliamungu** have been on the field for the last five days travelling from one point to another, organizing meetings with village chiefs, security and police officers so that responsibilities of theft are clarified. Meanwhile, plans are being undertaken to start clearing fields as the first planting season is due in three weeks.

Storm damaged shelters



Unexpected storms have recently damaged our shelters. Being located on the top of the hill, we always receive the strongest winds that blow across Komanda.



Recently the tarpaulins for our houses have been blown off. Despite the attempts to repair the tarpaulins they cannot serve as before. Shalom is trying to lobby for help from NGOs that helped us fix them. We are hoping and praying that they will respond in due time.

Recognition trip

Shaddai and his colleague **Lazo** traveled to Komanda to check out the site. The main goal was to analyse where the nursery school project could be implemented.



Lazo is the architect who helped design the plan of our house which we are building in Bunia. He is willing to come up with a plan as part of his contribution towards the project.

PRAISES

- We praise God for having healed **Shalom**. Also, we are thankful to God for having given peace to **Sylvia** after different medical examinations and advice she was able to receive about her eye. She is advised by some doctors not to undergo retina surgery as suggested in her last medical review (January 5th) as the problem has been for many years and now at her age, she shouldn't expect a big change.
- We thank God for financial and security provision over the past years up to now. We were able to finish paying for the land at Komanda, especially the place where the school building is located. This location was envied by "land grabbers" for setting up a shopping centre, but now all the land will be listed on the Title Deed.

PRAYERS

- Pray for security situation in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, especially in Goma. We had submitted a project to Goma through a friend who was keenly interested in our ministry. He promised to help the school with funding to establish the skills project that we lost at Ataloholu. Unfortunately, M23 rebels ransacked the city of Goma from 29th January up to date. We do not know what next.
- Pray for the title deed of the land and official registration of our association at Kinshasa level. All the required documentations are filed and payment made. However, with unstable security situation, administration is advancing slowly.
- Continue to pray for the health and safety of all at Komanda and for the spiritual growth of the believers and many more added to God's Kingdom.