

PYGMY REPORT - FEBRUARY 2023

(Way Alege)

“The LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore”(Psalm 121: 8)

February 2023 was special as we were aware that God was watching over our ministry. We also give thanks for your prayers for the safety of the Pygmies and the staff who made two trips to **Ataloholu** on February 6 and 7. The first purpose of the mission was to clear the bush around the school and staff buildings to safeguard against bush fire. This is the first time since April 2022, the Pygmies and the staff have gone to Ataloholu for a whole day. Clearing the bush was not easy to do in two days so they are planning to make more trips in the near future if security allows.



We give thanks to God that the School, staff and Pygmy houses have not been burnt down, and yet many people lost their homes in the area when we were forced to evacuate. In April, the ADF camped in our houses and fed on our food and livestock before they were chased by the regular army. After that, the latter made the premises into a military camp for months and ransacked the remaining items.



The second purpose was to harvest cassava. The year 2022 was the year we planned to set Ataloholu free from hunger. Staff, Pygmies and students were all set to plant plenty of food with the aim of setting up a feeding program at the school and selling the surplus.

Unfortunately, our crops were either rotting in the fields or stolen. Since it takes more time to harvest cassava, thieves have not as yet been interested but perhaps this first harvest might open the door for theft.



Assistance



Recently, we received 75kg of rice, 29 litres of Palm oil, salt and plantain bananas. We are thankful to God for the assistance we keep on receiving from different people. Even if the quantity of assistance does not match the number of the beneficiaries, we are all the same thankful because we are the only organization that is still hosting Pygmies in Komanda



As mentioned in our previous reports, I am assigned the responsibility of Community Development in approximately 350 assemblies. Because of insecurity in the rural areas, my first assignment is to help build their capacities and resilience in this time of insecurity. With your contribution, we were able to repair the above four by four vehicle to make our field trips.

On Friday 10th February 2023, we travelled to Nyankunde mission station 45 kms south of Bunia and beyond. Unfortunately, we fell into the hands of young militiamen who arrested us. They gave us several options: spend two days as hostages, burn the vehicle, pay 1000 USD or kill us. After long hours of discussion even if it is not always appropriate to argue with rebels, they decided to release us without paying a single coin.

The good news is that despite the incident, one of them allowed me to record his telephone number. I called him later informing him that I am coming back to the site. After several calls and intervention of other people, they accepted that we can carry on our activities and they will assist us. The reason why we are insisting on holding talks with them is that the area is where the brethren church farm is. It is on the main road to Komanda-Beni-Kisangani cities, 55 km South of Bunia, covering approximately 102 hectares. That is where ambushes are set and many people have lost their lives in that area. The local government has always blamed CE church that the lack of a project on such a huge space is the main reason why militiamen are using it for hiding.

Praises

- I praise God for the forgiveness that we were able to share with one of my former students and Justin, an American partner who was attracted by our work in 2012. He decided to team up with us and finally brutally departed in 2016. There were a lot of accusations that went up to the court. I was proved wrong with many lies that went to the Ministry of Justice in Kinshasa. Seven years later, they are asking for forgiveness and reconciliation.

Pray for:

- my **trip to Kampala**, Uganda to meet with Justin and for **restoring of fellowship**
- our **safety** as we will be making several field trips in the coming months.
- my **responsibility** in the position of Director of Community development for CE church.



Many church members in the rural areas are not able to farm or rear animals because of insecurity. We need to visit, encourage and at the same time hold discussions with the population and the rebels. This is what I have termed "Doing Development in a Difficult Context". Pray that God will give me time and wisdom to document all these experiences.

- **peaceful agreement** with our neighbours about the safety of our well. As you will see in the below photograph just behind the lady who is pumping water, we had asked our neighbour to sell off his plot for us. He refused at the beginning. We have just discovered that he had not finished paying his bill. Now the owner of the property sold it off to a second person who decided to build a house (behind the lady) just above our well. This will mean building a latrine just over the well. In this case, our water will be exposed to contamination. We have reported the case to the local authorities who have opted that the construction of the house be suspended while investigating. However, they said that the only option is to buy off that space. We are still waiting for the final decision from the local government official.