

PYGMY REPORT - APRIL 2022
(Way Alege)

“We are pressed on every side by troubles, but not crushed. We are perplexed, but not driven to despair”(2 Corinthians 4: 8, New Living Translation) because, **“He is not here: for he is risen, as he said”**(Matthew 28: 6).

As we celebrate the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, our hearts are full of joy because He is risen. But at the same time we are pressed by the troubles of life. Above all, we firmly believe that we are serving the living God who never fails.



Thursday **7th April** was the end of the schools semester. This was a joyful moment attended by approximately 65 parents both in **Ataloholu** and **Kangakolo**. In 2021, only a dozen parents came to check on their children’s results at the end of the first semester. The increasing presence of parents is an indicator that our goal that consist of building relationships with them through children is succeeding.

Such moments are precious for teachers because it is a golden opportunity to share the Word of God.

This year, **Lilian** Assero, the nursery school teacher and **Robert** Mokili proved to be the best teachers in reaching out to children and community members for Christ. The blending of education and mission is taking a perfect shape since teachers went through the spiritual retreat in December 2021. In our March 2022 staff meeting, staff members were reminded to serve God through their gifts.



School feeding program



In the past, we used to serve porridge for children. However, we have realised that it was a bit expensive as parents were not fully participating. This led us to changing the strategy experimented by Lilian. She has initiated a feeding program at nursery school 100% sponsored by parents based on contributions in kind and minimum cash. Though cooking is time consuming, parents have understood that it is their responsibility to feed their children. In our last meeting, we planned to extend the program gradually to the entire school. The reason why we are turning back to the feeding program is that most parents go very early to work in their farms therefore,

have no time to serve their children breakfast. This practice affects children’s school performance. We believe that with our agricultural program, the school will be able to partner perfectly with parents to offer proper meal to students once per day.

Security



For many years, **Ataloholu** village was naturally protected from Alliance Defence Forces (ADF) rebels by Ituri River. However, on Sunday **9th April**, after our Palm Sunday meeting, we were out visiting our sites at the Ituri River, when **Shaurimoya** village was attacked by the ADF rebels. Little did we know that the same night, **Jean Soli** (on the left in photo) and **Timothé Sumbukabo**, both pastors in the brethren church, were kidnapped by the rebels. Timothé was one of the key persons with whom we initiated our first Pygmy project at Shaurimoya.

Jean was a student at Nyankunde Bible School. It was Monday morning **11th April** that their bodies were found lying on the road. We later learnt that another assistant pastor also was killed.



The same Monday, rebels crossed to **Ataloholu** killing more people and burning houses on their way. They were intercepted by the regular army and interrupted approximately 800m away from the school. However, the following day, the rebels invaded the Pygmy and staff houses.

Teachers and staff fled leaving behind animals, their belongings, and school items. It is sad to notice that people could even abandon their own relatives like this grandmother who is a neighbour to our teachers. She was abandoned by her own daughter, grand-children and her brother. She crawled on her knees for approximately 150m but was unable to continue her 5km journey to escape from the rebel area. Our staff finally resolved to carry her on a wheelbarrow until they found one of her relatives five kilometres away from Ataloholu. We always thank God for having put our staff in a context where the love of Christ can be shared practically.

Staff evacuation



We were able to evacuate 13 out of 17 staff. The four remaining teachers moved into opposite direction but will be able to move 75km away from Bunia where they can easily join us.

The Pygmies are approximately 155kms away from Bunia. The rains have resumed, so they are spending their nights in very difficult conditions. The same applies for access to food and medical care.

On Thursday **14th**, we held a contingency meeting during which we prayed, read the Word of God and encouraged each other. We decided that the staff should take a few days of holiday until Easter is over and then think about what we can do in order to supply our needs for shelter and food..

We praise God for:

- His protection and that all staff members were evacuated
- The unity among staff members. In this hardships, we are all united;
- Positive minds which some of the staff members have developed. They believe that once the area is secure, they will be ready to go back;
- The peace and joy that is resuming at **Manzali church**. (According to information, the dismissal of Likambo and his absence is bringing new hope in the church and at the school.)

Prayer requests for:

- the finalization of Likambo's case in Manzali
- Protection and safety of the remnant of Pygmies of Shaurimoya. We have no clear news on their hereabout;
- The survival and health of the Pygmies of Ataloholu. Among them, there are expectant mothers, babies and the sickly;
- Safety of our buildings. May God blind the eyes of the enemies so that no fire is set on them;
- The survival and the psychological healing of the staff. Most of them have invested a lot in farming. Approximately 60% of their food comes from their farms;
- God to continue to guide in making and implementing contingency plans which would keep the staff busy until the way is considered safe to return to schools and ministry;
- Removal of Rebels from the area and for pygmies and workers to be able to return to a secure environment