

PYGMY REPORT - OCTOBER /NOVEMBER 2022

Way Alege

The month of October was full of blessings. Meeting Noela at Entebbe from 16 to 25th October was just as being in Australia. It is twelve years ago when I first visited Australia on my Master degree graduation in April 2010. This year remains engraved in my memory as I came to meet many friends in Sydney and Tasmania. Our ten days together at Entebbe recalled again these fond memories. We also sank in sorrow as we remembered many friends who went to be with the Lord between 2010 and 2022. But praying together, fellowshipping around the table and also thinking about the ministries God has entrusted unto us were the key moments.

We praise God for having brought us home and taken Noela back safely. The journey for all of us was tiring as Noela had to sit for long hours in the plane while we covered thousands of kilometer on bus to visit relatives near south-Sudan and then travel again across Lake Albert back to Congo.

...Blesse me indeed, and enlarge my territory (I Chronicles 4:10)



In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) Christian organisations rarely receive assistance from the government. The center of decision making being located in the capital Kinshasa, 2000 kms away from Bunia, and one needs connections with influential people in order to be heard.

However, our ministry towards the Pygmies has been selected to distribute assistance to the Pygmies that are based in the southern part of Komanda. Though we may not have the full control over donations that were sent from Kinshasa, we are happy to distribute faithfully what is entrusted unto us.



Our school was also invited on 20th November to the celebration of International day of Children's rights. The celebration drew different organizations in Komanda as well as the UN Peace Keepers

Timothy Denaya, the head teacher (in the left photo), was invited to receive a present for the school from the organizers. **Shalom** (in photo on right) and the head



teacher stand for a group photo after the ceremony.



Social and Spiritual activities

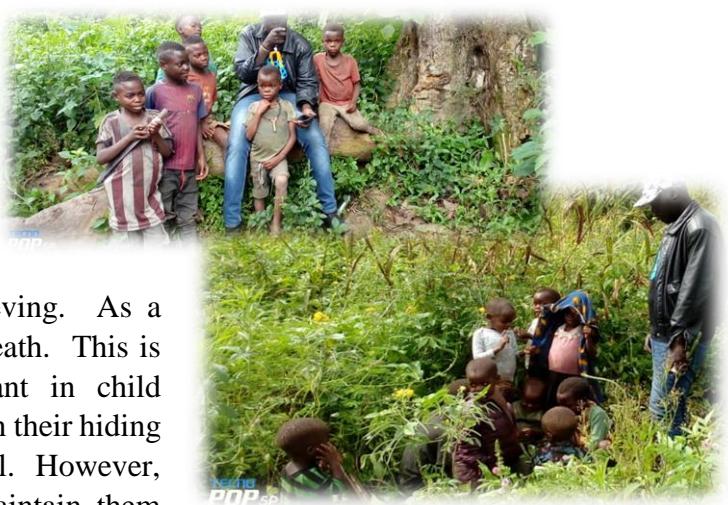
Our first goal at school is to replace discrimination, frustration and violence against the Pygmies with love and hope. **Robert Mokili**, one of the teachers and evangelist, is making the difference among the Pygmies. **Shalom** has also built quality relationships. His absence after knee injury was a matter of concern but thankfully has been able to return to the work in Komanda



Spontaneous joy, laughter, bonding were rare among the children. But with such a team, children are breaking socio-cultural and psychological barriers.



Lylian Asseru is another devoted staff member. She is trained in nursery school education and teaches Sunday school.



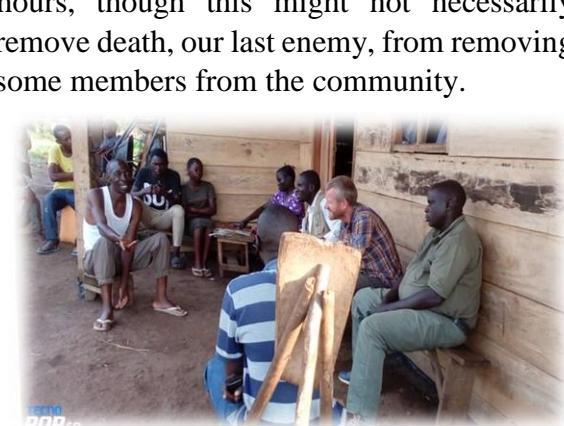
Tracking the dropouts in the forest

While some children are building quality relationships, the youth are getting out of control. They drop out of school and are always willing to venture into dangerous places in the forest, where the ADF rebels are still very active. In addition they easily get into drugs alcoholism and thieving. As a result, they are exposed to violence and death. This is where Shalom's intervention is important in child protection. He has to track down children in their hiding, encourage and bring them back to school. However, without activities that will attract and maintain them among others, chances of getting them back to school are slim.

Health concerns

The Pygmies in general and children's health in particular is fragile. Despite the fact that some health centers are willing to offer minimum and free basic medical assistance, many Pygmies are not willing to be attended to. On the other hand, not many medical personnel are willing to live with and understand the Pygmies and their worldview about health.

Dr Mark Godeshalk, a medical doctor from Holland, working with the Emmanuel Church (Brethren Church) is willing to cover this gap. He was based in Lolwa mission, but moved to Bunia because of insecurity. He detached one nurse from Lolwa as his contribution towards the project. In our last meeting on 21st of November, **Solange** (the nurse) is willing to move and live with the staff at the site. This will help us to monitor closely health cases during night and day hours, though this might not necessarily remove death, our last enemy, from removing some members from the community.



This is the case with **Bega**, one of the very active ladies who always stood with us in difficult



times. Bega, whose age is not known, after several blood transfusions, died of heart and lung complications and was laid to her eternal rest. According to Dr Mark, the main problem with the Pygmies is the amount of smoke they inhale in their life time. Smoking cigarettes, marijuana and living in unventilated huts are the main causes of lung disease. Fire is native for Pygmies. Unfortunately they cannot survive without it be it for cooking or for warmth.

We are trying to bond as much as possible with children so that they can spend most of their time as well as nights with staff members while waiting for better facilities. This is the reason why we built a dormitory for them in Ataloholu. But at the new site, they are obliged to spend their nights with their parents despite the lack of appropriate shelter.

As far as discouraging smoking habits, Dr Mark encouraged us to come up with creative measures to prevent them from smoking.



This is why we are in the process of acquiring musical instruments (flutes, drums and trumpets) and sports equipment. We are also introducing



sculpture art to create an education based on culture to prevent violence and deviant behaviour among the Pygmies. This project consists of creating an

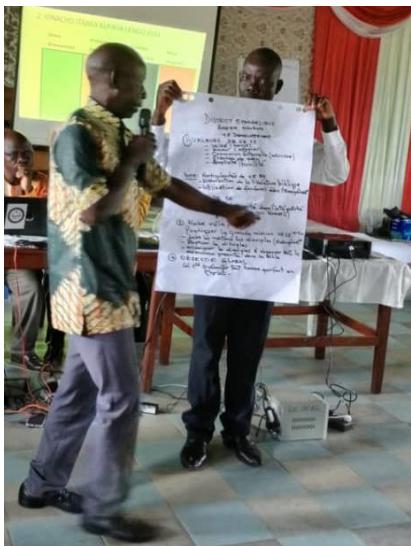


artificial forest next to the site, where sculptures will be erected to tell the history of the Pygmies, their experiences about life, their way of life, their violence and deviant behaviour. By doing so, we will also transfer the sculpturing skills to the youth. The same will apply to other skills.

This artificial space will include a flower garden where people can come and take souvenir pictures and will have to pay for the service. Items made by the Pygmies will be exposed and sold to visitors who come and see the park so that money is generated locally.

Praise and prayer items

- We praise God for the appointment to the position of Director of Community



Development of CE39 churches. This is an additional responsibility as I have to cover approximately 600 square kilometers in order to help empower local churches. We are aiming at encouraging Christians to use the land to produce and feed their families and generate livelihood in conformity with Genesis 2:15 "*And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it*" and Jeremiah 29: 4-14 "*This is what the Lord Almighty the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: "Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce*". These recommendations are regardless of security



that many people think is a hindrance to development. My first three months in the office are marked by awareness creation to take church leaders back to the Bible and discover what God's will

is. The aim is to be able to *do development in difficult times*. Over 260 pastors and church leaders attended the two days' workshop. The remaining task is to follow up and see whether they are putting into practice all the teachings. **Pray** for these long trips that I am going to make.

- We praise God for the vehicle the main office has put at our disposal to carry on this ministry.



This is the first car given to me in my lifetime for God's ministry. Unfortunately it has been sitting for many years without being used, it is a bit faulty and has to be fixed.

Once done, this will help us to reach villages easily and at the same time combine the trips with the Pygmy ministry. The vehicle will also help us carry tree seedlings and beehives because our tree planting project is combined with honey production.



As the Brethren church is planning to celebrate in 2025 100 years of the commencement of CMML mission in Eastern DRC, we are the “hinges generation” on which the old and new generation count. Pray that God will provide me with wisdom to help accomplish this task.

- We praise God for having answered our prayers. In collaboration with Dr Mark from Holland, we are pleased that the nurse, **Solange** is willing to live with our staff among the Pygmies. This is a prayer answered. Even if Solange works part time with us, her willingness to be hosted on the camps is an advantage.
- We praise God for the advancement of the construction of **housing for ladies**. We were logging timber using a borrowed chain saw as ours was stolen during the war. But we ended up spending money to fix the borrowed several times without success.



We have finally decided to go back to our traditional way of building houses using poles, reeds, and mud to build the walls and additional sand and cement, but it is worth it when timber is so scarce.

The housing is designated for the female staff and the nurse.



As far as eco-domes are concerned, we are still waiting for rains to decrease and then embark on completing them. For the last two months, the whole region is under heavy rains.



We bought the property and built the female staff house because the owner of this house (photo below) failed to sell his property on time. He is our immediate neighbour. The pygmies have

surrounded his property, therefore this makes it harder for him as he is not used to them. He initially raised the price (4500 USD) thinking that we are an NGO. We turned down the offer and now he has lowered it to \$2200. This is a fair price knowing that an empty plot is sold for 1250 USD in the area, even though the house will need some repair. We once thought that could be where Shalom would move with the Pygmy children who are at school.

- We praise God for his **provision**. We are able to receive 875 Kg of rice from the government. This is the second time we've received assistance from Kinshasa. The Pygmies who are under our care received half of the gift (435.5 Kg). This food is used mainly to feed children whose parents have feeding problems. Meanwhile, we are encouraging them to be active in gardening. We thank God that the person who sold us other properties is still kind towards the school and the Pygmies. The Pygmies have planted

groundnuts next to the school even though we do not yet own the property. The total area is 5000 square meters. We are not sure for how long he will be willing to allow us to use his property.

- Praise God for the successful meeting with **leaders of rebel groups at Komanda**. We were a bit concerned about our security and that of our investment. We are happy that the leaders assured us that they will not harm us neither damage the property. Though they handled Shalom brutally they again asked for forgiveness and promised not to repeat it again.
- **Pray for Lylian** and the Nursery and Sunday school. Since we were displaced from Ataloholu in April 2022, Sunday school sessions are held outside. The same with the Nursery school. In case of rains, they have to move their classes under the veranda which cannot allow free movement especially for nursery school children who want to play.

- Pray** that we will have a proper setting for them. Having a good nursery school would provide some additional income for the project because it is not free. According to the new law, primary education is for free. But parents have to pay for nursery, secondary and university education.

