

PYGMY CONTINGENCY REPORT UPDATE – MAY 2022
(Way Alege)

Pygmies in the **Ituri forest** are going through a traumatic moment in their history. For the first time in their lives they have been forcibly evicted from the forest because of insecurity caused by the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and now they have to adjust to the savannah environment. The adjustment of the Pygmies into this new environment is extremely difficult because of the following reasons.



First, intermarriages are rare between the Pygmies and other ethnic groups both from the forest and savannah areas. As a result, they have no kinships with other ethnic groups and cannot be hosted in case of emergencies.

Second, under normal circumstances in a forest setting, a group of Pygmies would be under the care of a Bantu farmer called “Mokpala”, with whom they would exchange their game against food products; sell their labour at a relatively cheap price; and in return, earn from the Mokpala social protection, health care and funeral expenses. In this insecure period, these relationships are broken as everyone seeks for safety.



Third, property ownership in the savannah is regulated and one has to pay a price to access it. So in this case, no Pygmy can access land.

Fourth, in the forest, the Pygmies have access to different types of plants that serve them as food and medicine, something they cannot get in their current setting.

Last but not least, Pygmies are perceived by other communities as sub-human with low moral standards, poor hygiene and violent.



However, the assistance you provided has given some Pygmies a sign of hope as they were able to move on Monday 16 May to their own property.

Your generous giving has not only solved their re-settlement problem but also



given access to minimum food items while the humanitarian organisations are still working on their logistics. It is four weeks since the Pygmies were displaced and apart from health care, biscuits and a few food items, the Pygmies have not yet benefited from adequate food distribution. We cannot pretend to have solved the problem, but the minimum we provide gives hope to them to face another day.



Praises:

- We praise God for his **provision towards purchasing property**. Hygiene conditions were rapidly deteriorating in the concentration camp, leading to poor living conditions, diarrhoea and death especially among children.
- We praise God for **His provision for food**. This gives the Pygmies energy to work for other people so that they can supplement their living expenses.
- We praise God because this massive displacement of the Pygmies has **opened the way for the Gospel**. **Teachers** are able to reach them with the Word of God.
- We praise God for **His protection**. A truck used for relocating the Pygmies was involved twice in an accident. There were no cases of death except injuries.

Prayer request:

- Since Monday 16, the ADF are moving back towards the Ituri River from the Kisangani direction where they were heading a month ago. This has led to more fear and another massive displacement of the Pygmies. Most of them have walked for days in the forest, therefore are exhausted. We were able to hire a truck to go and rescue them. They are grateful as they tell stories about being caught in the crossfire. Others are sick and very weak. Pray for their **health**.



- Pray for an old **Pygmy lady injured** in an accident. She was injured and admitted to the hospital.
- The Pygmies of **Ataloholu** keep on attracting their relatives to the newly purchased property. It has been difficult to protect the area where we urgently planted vegetables. Pray for the construction of **eco-domes as more shelters** are needed with the increase in numbers
- Pray for digging of a **well for water**. Because of the increased number of displaced people, the Pygmies have difficulty accessing clean water. Besides, there is a lot of discrimination in terms of water distribution.
- Keep praying for **those in Authority**. There is a lot of confusion and accusations, pointing fingers at the regular army for being involved in perpetuating violence for their own benefit.