

Ituri Forest Peoples Fund

promoting the health and education
of Efe foragers and Lese farmers
in northeastern Congo



NEWSLETTER

JUNE 1997

Our First News Since the War

Yesterday mail arrived from Kuli the clinic nurse. It was the first news we have had from the Lese and Efe in 9 months.

Monsieur Davidi

Habari yako? We are OK here but were terrified during the war when Mobutu's soldiers came. No one was killed. We all fled across the river to hide further into the forest. The soldiers broke into our houses and took all our seed rice and peanuts. They broke the door of the clinic, pillaged the dispensary and stole the cashbox. They took my stethoscope, my tweezers and my syringes. The women had hidden the microscope so the soldiers could not steal it. They torn down the door of your store house and took everything. We heard lots of bombs near the Nepoko river. We only returned to our houses when the liberators arrived. We only have cassava and plantains to plant this year but the Alliance soldiers don't steal from us. We don't know how we can restart the clinic without medicine but the school still has one or two books and the teachers are all still here.

When are you coming?

In addition to pillaging the clinic, the fleeing soldiers of Mobutu's army stole the saw that the teachers used to make school furniture, the maps and charts that were on the classroom walls, the school rubber stamp and ink pad, every pencil and scrap of paper, and of course the school bicycle.

To replace the clinic equipment, the school text books, and to re-supply the pharmacy we need to raise \$5,000. This is the first time that we have had to solicit your support this way. But we have no doubt that you understand why.

For over ten years the Lese and Efe have been working hard to provide their children with schooling and their families with health care. Let's not allow a civil war put an end to all their hard work! Please help this community replace what was taken from them. The money will be used to cover the purchase of the materials, airfreight to Congo, and the cost of hiring porters to carrying them to Andisengi. David Wilkie will be in Africa sometime between September and December, and he has agreed to travel to Andisengi at that time to help with the community's efforts at a new start.

Life has settled down for our friends since Kabila's army arrived. Kuli has resumed his monthly trips to the Catholic mission hospital in Mungbere for training, although it too was stripped bare by Mobutu's troops. The midwife, Anzalite-Elena, who was hired last summer has decided to remain near her family in Mambasa where she feels safe. The Health Committee want to choose a new candidate for midwife and are at present considering a local midwife named Idaya. Dr. Jean Marie Corbetta at Mungbere has agreed to provide Idaya with some formal midwifery skills if the committee decides to select her.

The Catholic mission at Mambasa has reopened and is beginning the process of replacing stolen vehicles, supplies and equipment. The hospital at Mandima was stripped by the Zaire army, as was the Mission Aviation Fellowship supply store. We still have no word on whether the nuns will return to Nduye to re-supply and restart the hospital and schools.

It will take time for the people of Andisengi to recover from the civil war. You can help! You have been a part of their lives through your support over the years, please don't forget them now in their time of great need. Please make a contribution today.