

# Ituri Forest Peoples Fund

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



## NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 1995

### General Issues:

Conditions in Zaire and the Ituri continue to deteriorate. Inflation remains at approximately 70% per month. The exchange rate was 3500 NZ/US \$1 in June and was 7500 NZ/US \$1 by August. Commerçants no longer are interested in using Nouveaux Zaire (NZ) because within days their cash holdings lose value. It was thus very difficult to find individuals willing (or able - they did not have enough NZs) to change more than US \$50 at a time. Bunia, Butembo and Beni are about the only places where you can still change large sums of money into NZs. US dollars and gold are now the currencies of choice in dukas (shops) and in the soko (market). It is now possible to buy 10 kg of beans, pay with dollars and get dollars in change. Almost all shopkeepers have tiny scales with standard weights (old sengi coins from the colonial period) that they use to measure gold dust and fragments. We saw two small children going to a duka to buy a block of soap with gold.

The road system, although always bad, has now effectively cutoff many towns. Trucks now take 3-4 months to make the trip from Bunia to Kisangani. Prices in Kisangani are 3-4 times that in Butembo as even beans and rice are being flown in - on old Soviet Union era passenger aircraft converted to cargo carriers. The Skol brewery in Isiro finally closed and the town is basically dead. The road from Wamba to NiaNia closed in November of 1994 - holes were often 200 meters long and well over truck deep. One truck driver said that he had failed to get through even when equipped with a 100m long wire cable. At present even motorcycles cannot get through. As a result, trucks are now using the Nepoko-Mambasa road (the road that passes through the project site) to move palm oil from Wamba to Bunia, Butembo and the refugee

camps in Goma and Bukavu. Though the heavy rainy season (September-November) had not yet arrived by the time we left, travel along the road from Ngodingodi to Mambasa is desperately difficult. Trucks are taking 3-5 weeks to travel from Dingbo to Nduye. Only about 7km of the 60km between Malembi and Nduye is passable with assurance. The Dingbo and Ukomba log bridges are rotting and about to collapse under the weight of the overloaded 5 ton trucks (some are carrying as much as 8 tons of palm oil). The Malembi bridge was repaired by Chef Apiobo (Chief of the Lese Karo at Nduye) using planks supplied by Les Green of Akokoro and transported in Pere Silvano's (of the Catholic Mission in Mambasa) truck. Soeur Anna at Nduye deserves credit for pushing hard and often to have the bridge fixed. Chef Fausten (Chief of the Lese Dese) was busy taxing commerçants at the Dingbo market when the bridge was being repaired.

The trip from Malembi to Nduye once took 2-4 hours, by a miracle we made the 60km trip in 12 hours, almost all in 1st or 2nd gear, because each time we came to holes with trucks stuck within them we were able to cut a new path in the forest around the holes. Many of the trucks stuck in holes do not have starter motors. To start their diesel engines they jack up the rear wheels, wrap a long rope around one wheel, place the truck in gear and have 20 guys pull on the rope - this turns the wheel, which turns the drive shaft, which turns the engine - that with luck starts!!!!

Many of the holes are filled with water to a depth of 4-5 feet. Many holes have been dug so deep by truck drivers hoping to find solid earth that they strike the water table. The road is now dotted by truck sized ponds that were once holes that are now impassable. Almost everyone agrees that the road will become totally impassable by the end of the rainy season. Truck drivers are already talking about abandoning the Wamba-Nepoko-Mambasa-Bunia road and driving around the forest Wamba-Isiro-Dungu-Faradje-Aru-Djugu-Bunia -- over twice the distance.

Soeur Anna (the nurse at the Nduye mission) is still attempting her monthly health care trips from Nduye to Dingbo, however, she was talking about stopping

them - she spends too many days travelling, too little time doing health care, and fuel and car repair costs are huge.

With the collapse of the road system and trucks and pickups taking months to make the trip from Wamba to Bunia a niche has opened for bicycle based commerce. Land trains of young men pushing and riding bicycles are now a common sight along the Dingbo-Mambasa road. Almost all carry 6-8 22 litre plastic bidon (jerry cans) filled with mafuta (palm oil). They can buy a 22l bidon for 15,000NZ near Wamba (approximately \$3) and sell it in Bunia for 150,000 NZ - in gold (\$30). Whereas trucks may carry 5-8 tons of palm oil in 200l fuel drums and take 1-2 months to make the trip, trains of cyclists can make it from Mungbere to Bunia in about 5-7 days. One surprising aspect of this new avenue of trade is that the young men who are plying this trade are using amphetamines to get them there and back. I was stunned when a mafuta cyclist asked if I could give to him 'speed'. He explained that everyone is using it - "it's great you feel strong - you never feel hungry - you can cycle all day and even at night if there is a moon", and seemed genuinely surprised when I said that I did not have any. I checked in a pharmacy in Mambasa and he stocked methylamphetamine and said that yes he sold lots as a "tonique."

With the Nepoko-Mambasa road being used by all trucks travelling from Wamba to Bunia the more entrepreneurial of local residents have opened restaurants to feed stranded truck passengers, and Chef Fausten and Chef Apiobo are trying to charge fees for 'use of the road and bridges.' Almost every village has a stand next to the road where they try and sell kitika (bananas), maize and to a lesser extent dried meat. Several farmers have tried to sell peanuts and rice to trucks but have had little success even when they offered shelled peanuts and hulled rice - apparently the cost of transport is too high to warrant shipping relatively low price items.

### **Health Clinic:**

Kuri is still in charge of running the Poste de Sante and given the present situation in Zaire he is doing a splendid job. He has had no real problems ordering and receiving first aid supplies and medicines from the pharmacy at Nyenkunde (the regional mission

hospital near Bunia). One order was mysteriously flown to Isiro rather than the preferred route via Mandima to Pere Silvano at Mambasa, to Sr. Anna at Nduye and thence to Andisengi. Reviewing the Poste de Sante accounting for FY 95 showed that Kuri is setting the price of medicines at the correct cost recovery level (based on purchase price and not controlling for inflation), and is bringing in cash equivalent to his outlays of medicines. The Poste de Sante is lucky to have Kuri who is honest, concerned about people, and a pretty competent primary health care provider.

The Ituri Fund continues to pay for Kuri's salary and the salary of the clinic guard. Ituri Funds are also used to augment the monies paid for medicines as inflation takes a heavy toll. A total of \$1500 was deposited in the Ituri Fund's pharmacy account at CME Nyenkunde to provide medical supplies for the clinic in FY 95. Copies of patient records have been obtained from the clinic and estimates of patient visitation rates and composition will be generated in the future.

A community meeting was called on June 26th 1995 by the President of the Health Committee (Kasimiri). The following is a summary of the topics discussed and agreed upon.

### **1. Construction of a permanent Poste de Sante building**

The community was concerned that the Ituri Fund's commitment to assisting in the construction of a permanent clinic building was waning. I explained that the community had not yet generated a list of materials needed to construct a permanent building. They responded by saying that was beyond their abilities and could the Ituri Fund help. I said that I would talk with Pr. Silvano at Mambasa as he has a team of masons and carpenters that he uses to build primary schools, to determine what would be needed to build a permanent clinic structure. I warned that I would not be able to provide an definitive answer regarding construction materials and transportation until I returned in May 1996, particularly given the probability that the road will close making it impossible to transport the materials to Andisengi. The community agreed that until plans develop further on the permanent clinic

building they need to replace the roof of the wattle and daub clinic building as it was beginning to leak.

## 2. **Medicines and supplies**

Given that Sr. Anna may no longer be able to visit the clinic the community decided to send Kuri or a committee member on the Poste de Sante bicycle to Mambasa to collect shipments of medicines from Pr. Silvano.

## 3. **Training**

The Ituri Fund has long agreed to sponsor the continued training of Kuri and to establish whether Andibuta (a male relative of Muni who lives near Kenitata and has been apprenticing intermittently with Kuri with no salary), and Idaya (a secondary school educated woman who once worked with Soeur Stephania as a midwife assistant) could start training as auxilliary health care workers.

Primary health care worker training is no longer available at the hospital in Mungbere as Pere Hernan has been reassigned to a mission in Europe and only one doctor is now stationed at the hospital - Pere Jean Marie. The regional medical director Dr. Kasereka was relocated to Bukava and was replaced by Dr. Twanzeba. The state hospital at Mambasa is understaffed and suffers severe shortages of supplies. Dr. Twanzeba would like the Ituri Fund to sponsor Kuli's continued training at the state hospital and send one of his fully trained 'Community healthcare workers' to Andisengi to take over the clinic until Kuri returns. The community rejected this proposal saying that they trust Kuli and do not want a stranger working at the clinic. The director of the Mandima hospital (located 10km east of Mambasa) was concerned about sending one of Dr. Twanzeba's clinic workers to Andisengi as they have a reputation for misappropriating monies and medicines.

Dr. Marianne the director at Mandima does not offer healthworker training and suggested that the Ituri Fund contact M. Chwekaba the Prefet of the Institute Technique Medical at Lolwa to determine enrollment qualifications, duration, and cost of health worker training at the nursing school.

Continued training for Kuli and initial training for Andibuta and Idaya is presently on hold until we receive a response from the nursing school in Lolwa. We expect to have definitive training plans in place by July of 1996.

## 4. **Microscope**

The committee reminded the Ituri Fund that we had promised to provide the clinic with a microscope. Kuli said that he had talked with a technician who was willing to come and work at the clinic conducting parasite analysis of patient fecaes and blood. Kuri explained that the technician would be paid by patient fees. This caused considerable discussion amongst community members and finally the idea was dropped. Kuri said that he knew how to use a microscope and to prepare fecal and blood smears for parasite identification. We agreed to bring a small natural light source microscope in May 1996, but authorised Kuli to purchase a microscope locally if he could find one and the price was agreed upon by the Ituri Fund.

## 5. **Hospital fund**

The community asked if the Ituri Fund could add new monies to the hospital fund - a fund lent to individuals so that they could afford to send their relatives to the Nduye or Mungbere hospital. We explained that given present inflation rates, unless lenders were charged 100% per month interest on their loan, the hospital fund would lose value so rapidly that its useable capital would dissipate after one or two loans. The community agreed that no new monies should be added to the now defunct hospital fund.

## **Primary School:**

The primary school in Andisengi now teaches a total of 208 children, who come from villages as far as the Cheferie at Alombi, 40 kilometers away. Some children are fortunate to have relatives willing to foster them so that they can attend school, other children must walk long distances each day. This is the only primary school in the Collectivite Walese Dese that spans over 60 kilometers of a barely walkable road between the Ukomba River and the village of Dingbo.

Last year, the Andisengi school taught 110 children in grades 1-5 at Akoro II, and 98 in grades 1-4 at Tumbungisi. These two schools are 9km apart - located in the two most densely populated areas of the Lese Dese Collectivité. In FY 1995 the Ituri Fund supported 7 of 9 school teachers in the Andisengi school.

Evariste Djokaba, the headmaster of the main school at Akoro II organized the clearing and planting of a school field. The field, located directly behind the school, was cleared and planted by the pupils. At harvest time 50% of the muhogo (cassava) was dried and sold to passing trucks and the proceeds used to buy chalk, pencils and notebooks, the remaining 50% was taken home by the kids - approximately 10 kg of muhogo per child.

Djokaba and Nezungoma, the two headmasters, organized the construction of two new school rooms by the pupils and their parents. Community meetings resulted in the local hiring of two new teachers (one at Akoro II and one at Tumbungisi), paid by parents in the form of peanuts, rice and palm oil. Both teachers received salaries during the first 2 months of their employment but not subsequently - the next 4 months.

The two school committees had arranged with M. Paul Akyemane the director of the national secondary school at Nduye to visit the Andisengi primary school to conduct teacher training and to discuss the possibility of graduates of this state unaccredited private school being accepted into the state accredited secondary school at Nduye. Akyemane completed 4 days of teacher training at the Andisengi school, and informed the school committees that for students to continue to the secondary school at Nduye the Andisengi school had to offer a full primary education with 6 grades, and he would have to test graduating 6th graders to ascertain if they were prepared to enter secondary school. Akyemane provided copies of national matriculation forms allowing the Andisengi school teachers to document, formally, students academic progress for each trimestre during each grade. These forms document students performance and are essential to their acceptance into secondary schools. The liason with M. Ayemane is critical to the success of the Andisengi primary school as it

legitimizes the achievements of pupils attending a private, unaccredited school. The Andisengi school committee deserves special recognition for taking the initiative to formalize the relationship between the Andisengi primary school and the Nduye secondary school.

A series of community meetings organized by the school committees resulted in the following decisions for FY 96. The schools at Akoro II and Tumbungisi were to be considered one school - the main campus at Akoro II and the satellite school at Tumbungisi. The two school committees were to be combined into one committee headed by Ngutcha Ngote. The two headmasters were replaced by a single headmaster M. LOTS Tsubba. Akoro II was to offer a complete primary school education with 6 grades to be taught by: Grade 1:ANDOA-Mateso; Grade 2:BUNGAMUZI-Rayabo; Grade 3:NEZONGOMA-Gabriel; Grade 4:MUSA-Matungulu; Grade 5:AMBOMI-Raphael; Grade 6:LOTS-Tsubba. Tumbungisi was to provide only 2 grades, children above these grades would have to walk the 9km to Akoro II to continue at higher grades. Teachers at Tumbungisi were chosen as follows: Grade 1:SAMBA-Gabriel; Grade 2:DJOKABA-Evariste. This rearrangement of classes in the two parts of the Andisengi school required that M. Nezungoma and M. Musa move from Tumbungisi to Akoro II and that M. Djokaba move from Akoro II to Tumbungisi. The Ituri Fund agreed to add an additional salaried teacher to the roster for a total of 8.

The new school committee decided to hold a graduation ceremony and a celebratory meal at the end of the school year. Over 300 people attended the 'mashindano' - most of the pupils and at least one parent of all the kids. Efe parents left forest camps 3-4 hours from the road to participate in their childrens' graduation. The event was a great success, thanks to Ngutcha, Lots and Djokaba's efforts. The community prepared and served food for all the kids and almost all parents and guests - a remarkable community effort for Andisengi.

The school is really working. Alison Noyes, a graduate student at Boston College, spent several days in inpromtu visits of the school and was impressed by the quality of education being provided

to the pupils. Alison recorded 8mm video of several classes which will be made available as either MPEG or QUICKTIME video clips on the ITURI FUND WorldWideWeb home page that will be online by the end of the year.

The major need for the school for the future is instructional materials in French and Swahili. Larger and better blackboards would certainly help to make teachers lives easier as would better desks and benches for the pupils. Maps and books in french and swahili are at a premium and would add much to the contruibutions of the teachers - who are fantastic given the resources they have available to them.

The Ituri Fund has continued its committment to support teachers salaries (8 at a total annual cost of \$179 per month (\$2136 per year) and to purchase books and to augment local purchases of writing materials.

#### **Financial Status:**

Fiscal year 1995 was a mixed success from a fund raising perspective. Donations from individuals (6 people contributed \$1419) were down over \$3000 from FY94, proceeds of the Cultural Survival Bazaar increased to \$1159 (up from \$582 in FY94), and sale of photographs to book publishers provided \$200. The good news was that after much effort to secure support from private philanthropic organizations the Ituri Fund was awarded a grant of \$23,000 from The International Foundation.

#### **Other Related Activities**

Bryan Curran continued to be invaluable with logistics assistance in the Ituri during FY 95, his work related move to Cameroon is a loss for the Ituri Fund.

David and Mark Jenike have just published a children's book about the Efe in the Ituri it is titled "Jenike, S. David and Mark R. Jenike (1995) A Walk in the Ituri Forest. New York: Franklin Watts" and is available in hardback for \$14.95 and paperback for \$9.95.

BCH, Inc of Santa Barbara recently produced a short film on the Efe and Mbuti of the Ituri titled

"Shadows of the Forest." Bob Bailey was a consultant on the film and was interviewed on camera. The film was aired on the Discovery Channel. Information on the film can be obtained at the Discovery Channel WWW home page <http://www.discovery.com>.

The Ituri Fund flyer is in the process of being revised and expanded to reflect the present state of activities in Andisengi.

Cultural Survival has launched their home page on the WorldWideWeb. It can be accessed using any web-browser (Netscape is by far the best) at [www.cs.org/~csinc/](http://www.cs.org/~csinc/) . They have a brief note on the Ituri Fund under their special projects section. Once we have our own home page setup on the Boston College server we can place pointers to it in the CS home page.

Cultural Survival has the rights to Colin Turnbulls tapes of Efe and Mbuti music and are considering making a CD the profits of which would be shared by CS and the Ituri Fund.