

Ituri Forest Peoples Fund
promoting the health and
education
of Efe foragers and Lese farmers
in northeastern Zaire



NEWSLETTER
SEPTEMBER 1996

General Issues

The Road

The road from Nduye to Andisengi is impassable by all vehicles except unloaded 4 wheel-drive trucks and commerçants on bicycles. Our LandRover made the first 70km from Mambassa to Nduye using mud-chains, but it was unable to continue the rest of the way passed holes that are now over 500m long and tractor-trailer deep - usually filled with water.

The near complete collapse of the road has had a devastating impact on the Andisengi community. The number of bicycle traders carrying palm oil from Wamba to Bunia and Butembo is down to a handful, practically eliminating Efe and Lese access to industrial commodities such as salt, soap, pots, cotton cloth, and tools. The holes and the mud make walking a slow and arduous task; walking along forest trails is now actually easier than walking along most stretches of the road.

The Utufe, Dingbo and Ukomba log bridges are broken or in such a state of decay that the 4 wheel drive trucks capable of traveling the road destroy them as they pass, leaving local people responsible for their repair.

The new Commissaire de Zone (equivalent of a US Governor) insists that a wealthy merchant in Isiro (an old coffee market town north of the Ituri forest) agreed to provide vehicles and laborers to repair the road - provided that the local communities gather rocks with which to fill the holes. But there are no quarries in our area, and even if there were, the local

communities do not have the equipment or labor necessary to haul enough rocks to the road. This situation is typical of what happens in Zaire. The Commissaire de Zone appears to his superiors to be doing something about the road - knowing that he can always blame the merchant or local communities for delays, the merchant appears to want to help the state to repair the road - knowing full well that the rocks will never be collected and his promise never fulfilled, and the local communities are left as the villains - seemingly unwilling to collect the rocks thus preventing the road from being repaired.

The Economy

Inflation continues to race along. Exchange rates that were 3,500 NZ/\$1 in June 1995, were 47,000 NZ/\$1 in August 1996. Since the Andisengi community has limited access to market goods, what money they can save is often worthless by the time goods make it to their area. One villager said that money today is kindling tomorrow.

Food availability

Early and heavy rains during the January-February dry seasons prevented most farmers from burning their fields. Field clearing had to be done by hand, which meant that field sizes were about 50% that of last year, and food was planted very late. By mid-May, food from last year's fields was completely gone, and sweet potatoes were the only crop ready for harvest from this year's fields. Food was severely limited and most Lese and Efe went to sleep each night hungry.

When peanuts were ready for harvest, unseasonably heavy rains destroyed much of the crop. Peanuts either rotted in the fields or sprouted in the ground before they could be harvested. The situation was made worse by the absence of honey (Brachystegia and Cynometra trees did not flower), which makes up a considerable portion of the calories consumed during this time of year. Add to this the lack of forest nuts and fruits (Irvingia and Canarium species), and the failure of wild yams (Dioscorea) to produce tubers, and the result was a long and severe hunger season that was not halted by either the peanut harvest or honey season. With small fields and an extended hunger period malnourishment was common, death rates high, and prospects for next year grim.

Health Clinic

Staff and Training

Kuli, the nurse at the Poste de Sante, continues to keep the clinic running, providing primary health care to local Efe and Lese families. Given the present situation in Zaire, he is doing an absolutely marvelous job. Now that the road from the catholic mission at Nduye is closed to cars, Kuri must walk the 60 km south to deliver orders and receive shipments of medicine.

Medical supplies are still purchased from the pharmacy at Nyenkunde (the regional mission hospital near Bunia), located several hundred kilometers from Andisengi. The Catholic Sisters at Nduye and the Fathers at Mambasa help Kuli enormously by transporting medicine orders and shipments to and from Nyenkunde..

Since Kuli started his position as the nurse, we have been looking for ways to continue his training as an Agent de Sante. This year we made arrangements with Pere Dr. Jean Marie Corbetta, the administrator of the hospital at Mungbere (about 100km north of Andisengi), to send Kuli to the hospital every two months for 3 days of continuing education. Kuli will travel by bicycle to Mungbere and stay with a friend's family whilst there. The Fund will provide Kuli with per diem to cover expenses incurred during his bimonthly trips to Mungbere. Father Jean Marie has offered to pay the cost of Kuli's training at the hospital.

Soeur Anne Brunelli, the Nduye mission nurse who once made monthly maternity and leper health visits to villages between Nduye and Andisengi has been relocated by her Mission to Butembo where she is responsible for building a new mission hospital. Her replacement, Sr. Rosa-Alba, had to stop the monthly visits to Andisengi because the road is now impassable.

Given that Kuli will spend 1 week every two months travelling to and from Mungbere, and that maternity/leper health visits will not be conducted by the Soeur nurse from Nduye, the Health Committee asked if the Fund would agreed to hire a local

midwife to assist Kuli at the Poste de Sante. The Health Committee identified a young Mamvu woman, Anzalite-Elena, who was trained as an Agent de Sante at a hospital near Mambasa, to be Kuli's new assistant.

Anzalite was working as a Sage Femme (midwife) at the state run Centre de Sante in Mambasa, with no monetary reimbursement for her services for almost a year. Anzalite was recommended because of her professional experience as a midwife and as a Poste de Sante accountant, and because of her fluency in KiLese/KiEfe. Anzalite was hired in August and will move from Mambasa to Andisengi to start work at the beginning of September. Her duties are to focus on maternity and child health care, and to run the Poste de Sante when Kuli is in Mungbere for training or is absent due to illness.

Costs of Medicine

Kuli continued to set the price of medicine at a cost recovery level based on the invoice price. However, as medicine is purchased only two or three times a year from Nyenkunde, the money received from the sale of medicine quickly declines in real terms over time. This is a problem because devaluation makes it difficult for Kuri to restock his supplies.

To overcome this problem, Dr. Jean Marie agreed to send to Kuli a price list for medicines each month. Furthermore, Kuli and the Health Committee decided to use the clinic's money to buy palm oil on a biweekly basis. Storing the cashbox receipts in palm oil until the next medicine requisition is needed will prevent inflationary losses.

The Efe and Lese of the Andisengi groupement will continue to obtain medicines at a discount relative to their true cost - outsiders pay on a cost recovery basis. The Fund is responsible for paying 50% of the cost of medicines for the Efe and Lese of Andisengi, and for paying the salary of the nurse and midwife.

Notes from Health Committee Meeting

A community meeting was called on July 20th 1996 by the President of the Health Committee (Kasimiri). The following is a summary of the topics discussed and agreed upon.

Repair of the Poste de Sante building

Several individuals at the meeting complained to the Health Committee that not everyone in the community was helping to rebuild the patients waiting room/shelter, or to repair the leaf roof of the clinic. Meeting participants discussed alternatives to volunteers maintaining the clinic buildings. The following is a list of the approaches discussed:

- have the local chief force people to work at the clinic,
- close the Poste de Sante if people do not volunteer to help repair it,
- use the primary school children to repair the clinic,
- allow the 50% discount on medicines only to the volunteers who help repair the clinic,
- add a clinic maintenance fee to the patients consultancy fee. This fee would be converted to palm oil and stored until the buildings needed repair, at which time workers would be paid in palm oil to undertake repairs.

After much debate, the community decided to institute a clinic maintenance fee that would be used to pay workers to repair or rebuild clinic buildings as needed.

Medicines and supplies

Kuli explained to the community the need to change the price of medicines each month to take inflation into account, and that Pere Jean Marie would send a new price list to the Poste de Sante each month. He also explained that local Efe and Lese would continue to obtain medicines at prices 50% lower than those paid by outsiders. The Fund agreed to contribute 50% of the cost of medicines for local Efe and Lese.

Training

Kuli explained to the community that Pere Jean Mari the doctor/administrator at the hospital at Mungbere agreed to continue his training as an Agent de Sante, and that he would be traveling by bicycle to Mungbere for 1 week every two months.

Microscope

Kuli thanked Boston College for their gift of a light microscope. The committee then discussed what was needed to have a technician conduct fecal parasite testing of patients at the Poste de Sante. The Fund noted that it could not pay for a laboratory technician but if funds allowed, it would purchase sufficient materials and supplies to conduct fecal parasite testing. The committee decided that if a qualified technician could be found his salary would be paid through patient fees. The technician would visit the clinic 2 times per month to test patients referred by Kuli. The technician would charge a fee for services – 50% of this fee would be retained, and the other 50% would be used to purchase laboratory supplies.

Laboratory supplies at the Nyenkunde pharmacy were relatively expensive. We hope to persuade a laboratory in the USA to donate the necessary supplies which we will transport to Andisengi in 1997.

Midwife

The Fund offered to pay the salary of a local midwife to help Kuli at the clinic. Anzalite-Elena was nominated by the health committee. The community agreed that the committee should interview Anzalite, and if they felt that she was qualified to work, to hire her - if she and her family agreed.

Night watchman

Gaston-Kautele the present night watchman was accused of using witchcraft to cause a local woman to miscarry, and to cause the death of 5 women in one Efe camp (Andinbundu). He confessed to the charges, and said that he wanted to move from Andisengi with his family to build a house at the river Kero (approximately 12 hours walk through the forest to the east). The health committee nominated 3 men to replace Gaston as sentinelle, and the community unanimously selected Aluma of Andingama. Aluma accepted the position after asking Gaston to give his word that he would not use witchcraft to punish him for taking his job and living in his house next to the clinic. Gaston agreed.

Primary School

Last year, the Andisengi school was made up of one central school at Akoro II that served students in the first to fifth grade, and one satellite school at Tumbungisi that served students in the first to fourth grade. These two schools are 9km apart - located in the two most densely populated areas of the Lese Dese Collectivite. Eight of the 9 teachers were supported by The Fund .

Student Enrollment

There were 238 children enrolled in the Andisengi primary school at the beginning of the school year. Of these students, 195 of them took the end of year examination. Student attrition was related to many factors, among them were illness, lack of school supplies, and the unwillingness of families to care for relatives' children who must live away from home to attend school

This last factor is critical to many children's ability to attend school. Many children walk 4 hours round trip to go to school each day. These children consider themselves fortunate because they can live at home while attending school. However, other children live many hours away from school, and must rely on family relatives and friends to care for them during the school year. This is because the Andisengi Primary School is the only 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

Teacher Training and State Certification of School

M. Paul Akyemane -- the director of the mission-supported secondary school at Nduye, visited the Andisengi primary school in May to conduct teacher training and to help standardize the primary school class exams. The headmaster M. LOTS Tsubba arranged for Abbey Prosper, the regional director of primary schools, to visit the school. Subsequent to his visit, Abbey Prosper agreed to obtain formal accreditation of the school with state officials at Wamba. Formal accreditation means that children who graduate from the primary school can, if their parents can afford it, continue onto secondary school in Mambasa.

Expanding Educational Services to Children

The community requested that the Fund pay the salary of a 6th grade teacher, so that children would be able to complete primary school in Andisengi. In the past, children had to move to Nduye or Mungbere to complete their primary school education. The Fund agreed to the community's request, and community members agreed to build the 6th grade classroom, which will be located at Akoro II. The Andisengi school now has 6 grades at Akoro II and 3 grades at Tumbungisi. As a result of the declining economic situation the Fund will provide salaries for all 9 teachers.

Access to Educational Materials

Primary school teaching texts (mathematics, geography, history, and biology) were donated to the Fund by the Ecole-BiLangue of Arlington, Massachusetts. Tyvex wall-maps (political and environmental) were purchased by the Fund and given to the headmaster. Four soccer balls were donated by the Winchester little league. The Catholic pedagogical press in Kinshasa was contacted to request additional locally appropriate reading materials for the school children.

Money to buy chalk, pencils and notebooks was provided by the parents of children attending school. The Fund purchased a small two-man saw to help the community cut boards for school benches and desks, and to make writing tablets for children whose parents are unable to purchase note books. Kids use the leaves of *Ficus exasperata* as sand paper to erase pencil marks from their writing tablets.

Personnel Changes

The Parents Committee on the advice of parents at Tumbungisi decided to fire one of the teachers - Musa-Matungulu, for using pupils to work in his fields after class, for unauthorized absences from class, and for sexual advances toward a pupil. Musa was replaced by Ulelembi.

Financial Status:

Fiscal year 1996 was a great success from a fund raising perspective - we raised a total of \$7,611. Donations from individuals (20 donors contributed \$4510) were way up from FY95, and proceeds of the Cultural Survival Bazaar increased to \$1775 (up from \$1159 in FY95). The Cincinnati Zoo contributed the profits of the sale of Zoo books during the month of December 1995 (\$585), and the 2nd Grade class of the Peter Noyes Primary School in Sudbury Massachusetts ran a T-shirt sales drive after hearing a talk about the Fund - raising a whopping \$1,326.

Fund expenses in FY96 were \$6,278 (\$2,786 for teachers salaries and books, \$2,892 for clinic salaries, supplies and medicines, \$200 for package delivery from Kenya to Zaire, \$148 for bicycle spare parts, \$152 for Zaire import tariffs on school and clinic materials (bartered down from \$350), and \$100 for Fund Flyer printing.

Operating expenses for the FY97 are estimated at over \$7500. The increase is related, in part, to the hiring of the mid-wife and 6th grade teacher.

Other Related Activities:

The Fund flyer was revised and expanded to reflect the present state of activities in Andisengi. Thanks to Jack Winter for his ideas and editorial assistance.

The Berkeley University Museum is holding an exhibit of Mbuti and Efe barkcloths this fall - *An Eternity of Forest: Paintings by Mbuti Women*, Oct. 2 - Dec. 1, 1996. David Wilkie will be giving a talk at the Museum on Sunday 24th of November at 3pm with the proceeds going to the Fund.

The Fund home page is up and running (with just a few glitches) at Boston College. The webpage has a few video clips (school scenes, Efe hunting, water-drumming, truck on the road etc.), sound files (Efe singing), and many more images (that are a tad too large for easy access over telephone lines). To access the Fund home page point your web browser to http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/cas/psych/

Morelli/Iturifund.html (NB: the web is case sensitive so please type this URL exactly). Please send comments and/or suggestions about what you would like to see on the homepage to DWilkie@msn.com.

Cultural Survival is trying to establish Student Chapters at Universities. If you are interested in promoting development of a student chapter - that would in turn help promote the Fund, please contact Amy Stoll at CS 90 Mt. Auburn Street, Cambridge, MA 02138. Tel: 617-441-5400. Email: csinc@cs.org

Cultural Survival is also considering producing a CD sized desk calendar for 1998 that includes a CD of Efe and Mbuti music (Fund music and archival records of Colin Turnbull). To be economical the Fund would have to purchase about 500 copies at \$4 each, hoping to sell them for about \$14-\$20 a copy. We are very cautious about speculating with Fund monies and would like your feedback on whether you think that this would be a good fundraising idea. Please send your comments to David Wilkie at the address below.

If you have moved or are about to move and would like future updates on the Ituri Forest Peoples Fund please make sure that you send a change of address to:

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or via email to:
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Please send your tax deductible contributions to:

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