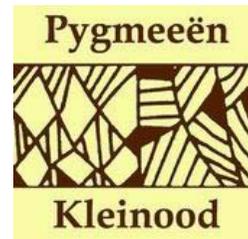




Increase of Forest Cutting speed in Eastern Ituri Forest, DR Congo

Efe Pygmies, not aware, collaborate to destroy their ancestors habitat, February 2007



Foundation Pygmy Kleinoed (www.pygmee.nl) in the Netherlands is since 1989 active to assist pygmies in their struggle to survive in a fast changing world.

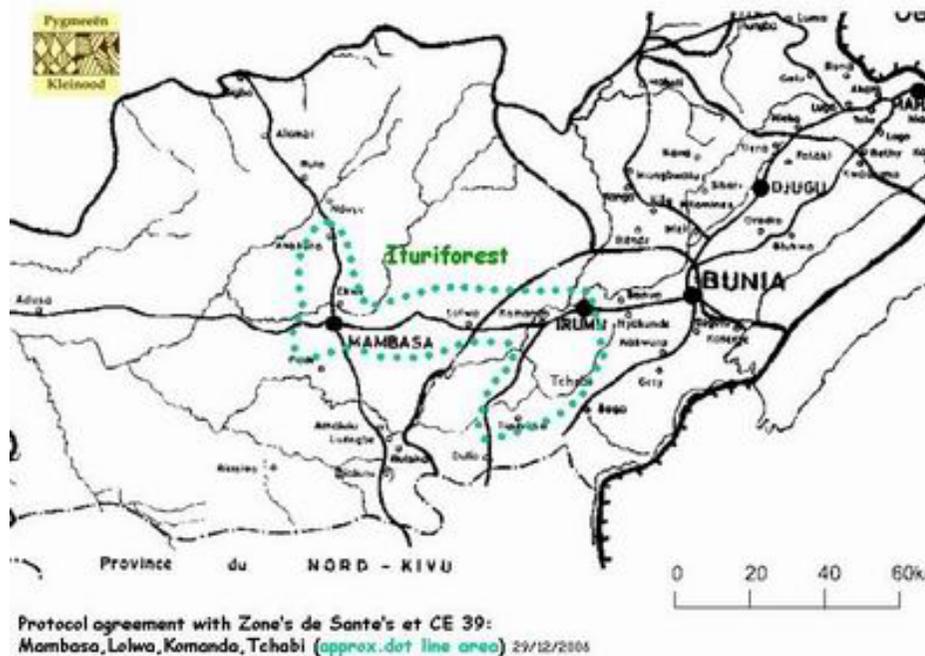
In close collaboration with our Congolese partner CIDOPY, (www.cidopy.org) we operate in Kivu/Virunga area and Ituriforest with medical care, education, food aid for IDP's and agriculture projects.

In 2006 a restart took place of the Mobile Medical Pygmy Team in Ituriforest, after our initiatives were on hold during an insecure periode of 5 years.

Our nurses enter the forest by foot to treat medically the pygmies in their natural environment.

This Immage report is one of the results of our observations during the monitorvisit in Ituriforest from 4 to 21 Februari 2007

Contact: info@pygmee.nl



The Ituriforest area is situated in Oriental province, the North Eastern part of DR Congo.
 After the Belgian époque, the dense tropical rainforest was hardly penetrable by absence of good roads. Huge mud holes blocked all transport occasions. Getting stocked in the mud was guaranteed. This impenetrable situation kept the habitat of Pygmies untouched.
 Since mid 2006, a rehabilitation and reconstruction of the roads is build up. This is resulting in more safety situation for the forest people and IDP's in the refuge-

camps, the commercial transport activities are increasing after the rebel wars. The cars and trucks don't need 4x4 wheel drive anymore. The top speed of the vehicles can be easily 90 km per hour. This is resulting in dust clouds in the dry period. But the population along the road is rather happy with the new modern road.
 There is a negative effect: the forest has become open and timber logging contractors started to do their destructing job.....what is equal to the destruction of the natural habitat of the Efe Pygmy People.



On the new road Komanda – Beni, near Idohu, we saw in one morning 6 container-lorries of each 30 m³ ready for loading timber.

We became curious and learned quickly: this is not for local use, the lorries are driving to Uganda and further.

Close near the road, we saw timber store places all over, at each store places we saw different marks on the wood. Names and code's of the instructors, all sorted out. Small offices and market activities, restaurants and drinking places in direct neighbourhood.

It is clear the timber is modelled in standard measurements by the cutters with chainsaws.

Talking with the local people around, they informed us about the participation of the villagers to work in this the process.

Bantu villagers and forest people, like Lese and Efe pygmies collaborate with the chainsaw equipments to transport the wet and heavy boards to the store places near the road.



Pygmies carry the boards by 2 people, on their heads, with a weight of approximately 70 to 80 kg fresh and wet timber over a distance of 7 km and more.

They informed us freely about their payment for this job: 5 US\$ per board per team for 7 km transport. One team can do this once a day. The payment is done direct after reception of the timber transport.

Some times a single pygmy is carrying his load on his own. He was proud of being so strong: his useless bow and arrows in his left hand.....hunting is impossible: the noise of chainsaws made the game to disappear.

Pygmies can't carry this load for long (!), exhausted they drop often the timber on the forest floor.

The pygmies show to the chainsaw teams the right trees to cut: Linzo, Liboyo, Lombala (Muvula), Ebene, Punga (=Mahoney) Tobo Ngomangoma, Mutonde are some hardwood names in local and swahili languages.

It is clear, the short term vision of having a job and some money is the motivation for them.

This is a sad manipulation by the contractors and responsables, because the profit at the end is absolutely zero. We see later...



Pygmies and Lese villagers are doing the timber transport, each on their own way. Some Lese villagers are using their bicycles for transport: boards weight more than 100 kg. The bicycles are more or less reconstructed by wood stick supports at the front, in the middle and at the back carrier.

The Mobile Medical Pygmy Team come across, during the walk into the forest to visit pygmy camps, lots of porter groups all the time. The timber production must be serious.....



Information of a chainsaw couple is telling us in the area of Idohu are ca. 30 saw teams daily busy to cut trees. Others, (earlier concession owners for local use: they were overruled by new contractors.....) talk about more than 100 chainsaw teams. This increase of logging is started in the year 2006: the workers say, they work from sunrise to sundown, 7 days a week and are cutting 10 to 15 big trees per day. Every tree is destroying more trees during the fall. The trees are cut into boards of different size and the waste is left behind.

We estimate the efficiency to collect timber of a tree is less than 50%. The thickness of the saw spoil a lot of wood, the precision of sawing is not high. The “non courant” parts are left behind in the ‘ex-forest’.

In the pygmy camps the chainsaw teams are familiar: even the pygmies are used to bring food in the forest on the working spots.

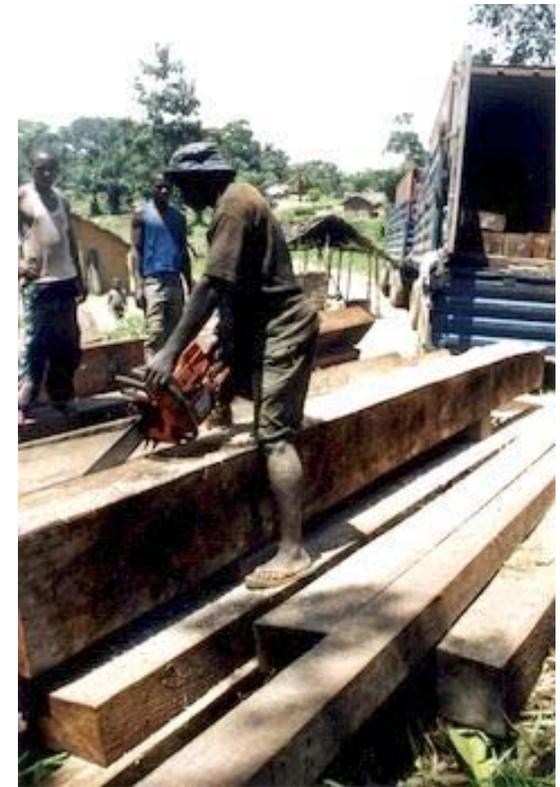


Around this area there are 8 pygmy camps located: Andiomba, Mautu I and II, Andasimba, Andiangu, Matomba, Dominique, Andipodu.

We visit 3 camps to treat medically sick pygmies. The camps are not situated anymore in typical forest areas, but in big open places, with no shade and in hot burning sunshine. In the camps are no young men present. Only women and children and some elder men. The timber transport calls all the men. No hunting activities anymore.

Close to the road we find a group of ca 8 village woman with cooking pots in front in a line. This cooking pots are placed on a charcoal stove to prepare the food and soon the dinner is ready to eat.

This commercial activity is closing the economic circle: heavy transport labour – low payment - buying food - no money left – next day the same: no profit at all and the forest is disappearing.



You can see in the pygmy camps the pygmy transporters passing by, with their load on the head. The Mobile Medical Team was surprised to this scene.....

Transporters are hungry after the heavy transport and collect their money. They need the food and look: it is there. Half of the money is spend to this food and eaten. The other half is spend in the local bar to drink a few cups of alcoholic palmwine/chai, till they are drunk.....

They are not aware what they are doing: suppose they understand fully what is going on, they are not able to refuse.

The lorry containers are waiting.....

Intensive Timber logging in Eastern part of Ituriforest, WaleseVonkutu-area:

Consession permission: "legal" Timberlogging with collaboration of Chef de Collectivité (Idohu) en Chef de territoire in Irumu. It is locally well-known the CODE FORESTIER, date 1939 is used.....

Checking and control: None! The concessions are practically unlimited.

Timber concession places: around the Bantu villages Idohu, Ofay, Mbau, Luna, Loya, Katabei, Bwana Sura, Ndalia, Bamande and more.....

Chainsaw teams: between 30 (info chainsaw team) to 100 (info independent informers)

Saw speed: 10-15 trees per day per sawing team

Sawing days: 7 days per week, all year long.....

Transport personal of timber out of the forest: Efe pygmies on their heads and Lese forest dwellers sometimes with bicycles.

Weight of timber : estimate 80 kg, possibly more....(!)

Road transport timber: Closed 30 m3 containers on lorries direction of Uganda border and Mombasa/Kenya – Europe, Japan, America, etc., etc.,

Calculations and Conclusion:

Chainsaw teams: mean 65 (30 to 100)

Sawing time: 365 days per year

Trees cut per day: mean 12,5 trees (10 to 15)

> Number of trees cut in this area: $65 \times 365 \times 12.5 = \text{approx } 300000 \text{ trees per year.....}$

Suppose: one big falling tree is destroying 0,5 hectare (50 x 100 meter) = 0.005 km^2

Destruction speed of Ituriforest is: $300000 \times 0,005 \text{ km}^2 = > 1500 \text{ km}^2 \text{ per year}$