

# **Indigenous Peoples, Poverty and Development**

## **Ch. 4: Central Africa**

### **The Case of the Pygmies**

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## 1. Introduction

Four main criteria are usually used to define indigenous peoples, especially on the basis of the Latin America experience: (i) they are descendants of the original populations inhabiting their lands at the time of conquest, and identified as such; (ii) they speak a distinct native language and typically aspire to remain distinct culturally, geographically and institutionally rather than assimilate; (iii) they have affinity and attachment to their land; and (iv) they tend to maintain distinct social, economic, and political institutions within their territories (Martinez-Cobo, 1986, quoted by Patrinos et al., 2007).

In Africa however, it is less easy to identify indigenous peoples than in other regions such as Latin America because many ethnic groups could be considered as belonging to native populations. Yet if there is one group that does stand out as indigenous even according to those with vastly differing views on what exactly constitutes indigenous in the context of Africa, it is that of the Pygmies. Using a range of different data sources, and based on detailed country case studies by Backiny-Yetna and Wodon (2010a, 2010b) and Ben-Achour et al. (2010), this paper provides an analysis of the standards of living of the Pygmies living in Central Africa. As documented among others in African Commission (2006), the Pygmies are found in many different Central and Southern African countries (Angola, Botswana, Burundi, Cameroon, CAR, Gabon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Namibia, Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Uganda and Zambia), but in this paper, on the basis of data availability, we focus on three countries: the Central African Republic (CAR hereafter), the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC hereafter), and Gabon.

The Pygmies are considered to be among the oldest inhabitants in Central Africa, speaking different languages from the Bantu, the main ethnic group of the region, especially in the DRC. Their semi-nomadic lifestyle has persisted largely unchanged for thousands of years, living from hunting, fishing and gathering wild fruits and nuts. In the last two or three decades, however, under the influence of multiple factors, these populations have gone through a process of semi-sedentarization. More precisely, traditionally, the Pygmies in Central Africa have been closely attached to the rain forest. They were the “Forest People” (Turnbull 1961), and the forest was the source of their religion, their livelihood and their protection. They used to lead a nomadic life in camps of 30 to 40 families, which maintained regular links and exchanges with each other. Their mostly egalitarian and horizontal society acknowledged the wisdom of elders who preserved the community’s knowledge of the sites, plants, animals, ghosts and spirits as well as their entire cultural heritage (rituals, music, dances, holy sites) and practices (pharmacopeia, hunting and fishing). Elders occupied prominent positions within community and settled disputes. They lived in simple huts made out of leaves and branches.

This traditional lifestyle should not necessarily be equated with a life of poverty. It had its own dignity, its noblesse and coherence and it is part of the universal heritage of humanity. Yet today, the traditional Pygmy lifestyle is in danger: as a population, they are losing what constitutes their identity and the richness of their culture and knowledge due to gradual sedentarization. Their access to the forest itself, as well as to the land that they cultivate is increasingly at risk. In the DRC, their relationship with Bantu farmers – Sudanese, Nilotic – used to be described as harmonious (Ndaywel 1997) as the Pygmies managed to maintain a relative independence from the Bantu. The current situation presents a less idyllic picture of the relations between the two communities. Subjugation, a devaluation of their culture, denial of rights, looting and violence are what numerous Pygmies are now subject to every day. Fieldwork conducted for this study suggests that many Pygmies are very poor and being exploited by the Bantu.

It is worth noting that the Pygmies are not the only indigenous population of the region. In the Central African Republic especially, the Mbororos, who descend from Peuhls living in the Sahel, may not strictly speaking be indigenous in the sense of the criteria cited above and used by the international organizations. Indeed they emigrated in CAR only about 50 years ago, in the search of new pastures. However, their

minority status (they represent 1 percent of CAR's population according to the 2003 population census), lifestyle, and deprivation could lead to consider them as indigenous, and surely as vulnerable. However, as the analysis presented in this paper will show, they tend to be less poor than the pygmies.

Evidence from Latin America and elsewhere in the world suggests that in most (but not all) countries, indigenous population and ethnic minorities suffer from higher poverty levels compared to the national averages in the country they live (Hall and Patrinos, 2006). In Africa, however, good data to measure poverty and well-being among indigenous groups are scarce. In many cases, household surveys in the region do not include ethnic variables which could help for such analysis. And even when this information is collected, the sampling methodology (i.e., lack of oversampling of minority groups) is not usually designed to provide enough observations in order to lead to robust conclusions relative to the living standards of these populations. In the DRC, for example, the nationally representative household survey of nearly 12,000 households implemented in 2004-05 had only 29 households with a Pygmy household head. Because of such lack of data, most studies rely on ethnographic approaches, which are very useful, but cannot necessarily provide robust national estimates.

The objective of this study is to draw together both quantitative and qualitative information to provide a diagnostic of the well-being of the Pygmies in Central Africa today, with material from three countries: the DRC, CAR, and Gabon. CAR is one of the poorest countries in the world. In 2008, the GDP per capita was only \$300 and about two thirds of the population lives in poverty. The nation is divided into over 80 ethnic groups, each having its own language. The largest ethnic groups are the Baya (33% of the population), Banda (27%), Mandjia (13%), Sara (10%), Mboum (7%), M'Baka (4%), and Yakoma (4%). The Mbororos are estimated to count for 1% of the population and the Pygmies to be at 0.3%, according to the 2003 population census.

The DRC is the third largest country by area in Africa. GDP per capita was \$184 in 2008, one of the lowest in the world and household survey data suggests that more than 7 in 10 people live under the national poverty line. There are over 200 African ethnic groups, of which the majority are Bantu (80% of the population). Other important groups include Sudanic-speaking groups in the north and northeast. Among the Bantu-speaking peoples, the major groups are the Kongo, or Bakongo, in the south; the Luba, or Baluba, in East Kasai and Katanga; the Mongo and related groups in the cuvette area; and the Lunda and Chokwe in Bandundu and West Kasai; the Bemba and Hemba in Katanga; and the Kwango and Kasai in Bandundu. The four largest tribes — Mongo, Luba, Kongo (all Bantu), and Mangbetu-Azande (Hamitic) — make up about 45% of the total population. The pygmies account for up to 1 percent of the population.

Gabon by contrast is a high medium income country with an estimated GDP per capita of \$8,085 in 2008. But because inequality is high, so is the level of poverty; in 2005, one third of the Gabonese lived under the national poverty line. There are over 40 ethnicities in Gabon. The largest ethnic group is the Fang, located in northern Gabon and southern Cameroon, including about 35% of the Gabonese population. The remainder of the Gabonese population is the Bantu, containing the following ethnic groups: Benga, Beseki, Kombe, Mpongwe (3%), Baduma (16%), Eshira (10%), Okande (4%), Bakalai (7%), and Bakota (14%). The Pygmies are a small minority and are distributed throughout Gabon and are comprised of different ethnic groups: the Baka and the Bekui in the north, the Bakoya in the North-East, the Barimba in the South and the Baboongo in the South-East.

The data used for CAR and Gabon in this paper comes from the two countries' latest population censuses, both carried out in 2003, given the lack of household survey data with representative samples of the Pygmy population. These censuses have basic information on household composition, education and labor market at the individual level, as well as assets at the household level. A population census has the advantage of being exhaustive, giving the possibility of having enough observations to draw robust

conclusions even on small segments of the population. On the other hand information is more limited than in a survey. For example, no information on expenditure or income can be collected through a census. Indirect techniques can nevertheless be used to conduct poverty or distributional analysis with census data by predicting the consumption level of households using poverty mapping. This is what we do in both Gabon and CAR.

The work on the DRC is more qualitative. Within Pygmy camps, information was obtained through individual interviews with key informants (Pygmies and non-Pygmies, with emphasis on the former), using open-ended questionnaires, focus groups with diverse members, including local authorities, women, elderly and youth, and direct observation and open-ended group discussions. Although a statistically representative sample for the analysis was not possible in the DRC at this stage, the (mostly qualitative) data collection was significant enough to obtain a purposive sample through which information and facts could be derived, analyzed and extrapolated with an acceptable level of confidence enhanced by the fact that the study covered all provinces where Pygmies are present (Kivu Sud, Kivu Nord, Maniema, Katanga, Kasai Oriental, Kasai Occidental, Equateur, Bandundu, and Province Orientale). In addition to qualitative data collection in Pygmy camps, data from the national “123” household survey were also used to compare key statistics between Pygmy and non-Pygmy populations. While as mentioned earlier the Pygmy sample in the 123 survey is very small and thus not statistically representative, the results obtained from the survey analysis were very similar to the results obtained through the qualitative fieldwork, and thus gives us additional confidence in the validity of the results.

Overall, the Pygmy population in all three countries appears to be very poor. Children are not enrolled in schools and adult literacy is low. Health outcomes are weak, and vulnerability is high. In addition, the material from the qualitative work in the DRC suggests that many among the Pygmies perceive themselves negatively. This negative image is not only related to their poverty and a lack of access to goods and basic services, but also the result of certain patterns of behavior which are part of their culture (type of housing, religious beliefs, rites and practices, etc) that are considered “bad” by their neighbors. Although most of the Pygmies are willing to change while remaining culturally “Pygmy”, the fieldwork shows that both the Bantu and the state and its institutions do not treat the Pygmies in a fair manner that would allow them to make informed changes and adaptations to improve their general living conditions and live in harmony with their neighbors while preserving their uniqueness (World Bank, 2009).

## **2. How many Pygmies are there?**

There is great uncertainty about the number of Pygmies living in Central Africa. This uncertainty can be illustrated in the case of the DRC. Researchers based in specific areas of the DRC have suggested that there may be between 100,000 and 250,000 Pygmies in the country as a whole. Other estimates, including those from the “Dynamique Pygmée”, an advocacy group, mention up to 450,000 Pygmies. It is difficult to estimate the size of the Pygmy population because the only census ever undertaken in the DRC since independence was in 1984. It was updated by the Service National des Statistiques Agricoles (SNSA; statistical office) between 1990 and 1994. There are regular, yearly administrative censuses but they have been subject to a number of distortions, and do not typically have information on ethnicity.

NGOs involved in the preparation of a Pygmy development strategy for the DRC cooperated with authorities to estimate a percentage of Pygmies living in different areas in relation to the total population. These percentages were then applied to the overall population of the areas to estimate the size of the Pygmy population. In some cases, the numbers were directly estimated by Pygmy support organizations on the basis of their knowledge of the communities. The resulting overall estimates, provided in table 1, suggest that there may be up to 660,000 Pygmies in the DRC, i.e., slightly more than 1 percent of the country’s population. Although this is a more systematic effort than what was ever attempted before, the numbers remain estimates that cannot substitute for a proper census. In terms of geographic distribution,

of the 147 territories of the DRC, 59 were identified as having at least one Pygmy community. But for 25 of those 59 districts, only very rough estimates of the number of the Pygmies could be obtained.

In the CAR and in Gabon, estimates of the number of the Pygmies can be obtained directly from the Census data, where households are asked to which ethnic group they belong. In the CAR, only 0.3 percent of the population declared itself as being Pygmy, and in Gabon, the percentage is also well below 1 percent (although there was a surprising sharp reduction in the number of Pygmies between the last two censuses). Still, in all three countries, the share of the total population considered as Pygmy seems to be at or below 1 percent. Pygmies are thus a small group in terms of their share of the overall population, but given the large population of the DRC especially, they still represent a sizable group.

**Table 1: Documented Pygmy numbers for all provinces in the DRC**

Province	Number	% of total	Name	Lifestyle
Equateur	172,197	26%	Twa	Sedentary or semi-sedentary
Province Orientale	16,804	3%	Mbuti	Nomads in the process of sedentarization
Bandundu	56,210	8%	Twa	Semi-sedentary
Kasai Oriental	n.d		n.d	Nomads
Kasai Occidental	n.d		n.d	Nomads
Maniema	4,452	1%	Twa	Semi-sedentary
Katanga	320,930	48%	Twa	Sedentary
Nord Kivu	25,871	4%	Twa	Sedentary
Sud Kivu	63,600	10%	Twa	Sedentary
Total	660,064	100%		

Source: World Bank (2009).

### 3. Poverty

Good data have up to now been lacking to assess the level of poverty among Pygmies, and to some extent the very concept of poverty as traditionally measured through the comparison of a consumption aggregate and a monetary poverty threshold is problematic, at least to some Pygmy groups. Indeed, the Pygmies' traditional nomadic lifestyle cannot be equated with poverty, as long as the outside conditions are favorable (i.e. good access to natural resources), but it does constrain their access to education and healthcare. However, once they abandon their traditional lifestyle and become sedentary, then their standard of living is often lower than for the rest of society. Hence, fieldwork and ethnographic studies have suggested a large gap between Pygmies and other groups in terms of ability to meet basic needs, assets, literacy, mortality and morbidity, and clearly the Pygmies' monetary income is also lower than that of other groups. But so far, little systematic quantitative evidence had been collected to compare both groups.

In the case of Gabon and CAR, poverty and welfare quintile estimates on Pygmies have been obtained by relying on poverty mapping techniques, which help in estimating poverty for small, geographically defined population groups. Elbers et al. (2003) have shown how to construct poverty maps by combining census and survey data. The idea is straightforward. First, a regression of per capita or adult equivalent consumption is estimated using household survey data, limiting the set of explanatory variables to ones common to both the survey and the latest census. Second, the coefficients from that regression are applied to the census data to predict the expenditure level of each household in the census. Third, the predicted household expenditures are used to construct a series of poverty indicators for geographical population subgroups. Although the idea is simple, its implementation requires complex computations.

The poverty mapping technique was used here to assess poverty levels among the Pygmies, because they are not well represented in the Gabon and CAR household surveys. Table 2 provides estimates of consumption per capita and poverty among Pygmies and non-indigenous populations in Gabon. The share of the population in poverty among Pygmies is twice the level obtained in non-Pygmies, and the differences are in proportional terms even larger for other poverty measures. In the CAR, similar data is provided in table 3 by quintile of estimated per capita consumption. Again, Pygmies are much poorer, in the sense that they are much more likely to belong to the lowest quintiles of consumption.

**Table 2: Poverty and welfare indicators by ethnicity in Gabon**

	Poverty indicators			Per capita consumption (Fcfa per year)	
	Share of population in poverty	Poverty Gap	Squared Poverty Gap	Average	Median
<b>Gabon</b>					
Pygmy	70.1	30.0	16.4	342896	303282
Non-Pygmy	32.7	10.7	4.9	760399	587879
All	32.8	10.7	4.9	760067	587589

Source: Authors' estimation

**Table 3: Population share by quintile of per capita consumption, by ethnicity in CAR**

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Total
<b>National</b>						
Mbororos	46.7	14.0	13.1	11.6	14.6	100
Pygmy	89.7	6.2	2.4	0.9	0.8	100
Non-indigenous	21.0	18.7	20.1	20.1	20.1	100
All	21.4	18.6	20.0	20.0	20.0	100

Source: Authors' estimation

In the case of the DRC there is no national census, but at least some data are available from the “123” survey implemented in 2004 in Kinshasa and 2005 in the rest of the country in order to compare a range of indicators between Pygmies and the rest of the population. These data can be used to provide some idea of the standard of living of Pygmies (we use the term “idea” as the data are not strictly statistically representative of the Pygmy population due to the very small Pygmy sample size). Table 4 provides key results on poverty and selected other indicators. The 123 survey includes a total of 11,959 households, of which only 29 declared themselves as belonging to the Pygmy group. Using the expansion factors from the survey, this would mean that there would be 63,097 Pygmy individuals out of a total population of 54 million people (this is much smaller than the estimate of the Pygmy population in the DRC provided in the previous section, but remote groups are often underrepresented in national surveys). While statistics provided on the basis of only 29 households (and 110 individuals) observed in a survey are subject to caution, the message seems appropriate regarding the living conditions of Pygmies.

The difference in poverty estimates between the Pygmies and the rest of the population is large. Poverty is measured in the DRC as in other countries by comparing a consumption aggregate with a poverty line that is meant to capture the cost of basic food and non-food needs. Poverty is truly massive in the DRC, since 71.7 percent of the population was estimated to be poor. Yet the proportion of the Pygmy population that is poor is even higher, at 84.8 percent. Measures of poverty that take into account not only the share of the poor but also the distance separating the poor from the poverty line (such as the poverty gap) or the inequality among the poor (such as the squared poverty gap) also suggest very large

differences between the Pygmies and the rest of the population. The data in table 4 suggests that in the DRC, the Pygmy population is significantly poorer, less well educated, rural, and more involved in the informal sector than the rest of the population. Pygmies are hard working, as suggested by very high rates of labor force participation, but they appear to be especially vulnerable.

The DRC qualitative work suggests that some of the main reasons for the impoverishment of the Pygmies are linked to their past on the one hand, and to the current Congolese society on the other hand. Reasons include their submission to their Bantu neighbors which is ingrained in the two communities' history of paid or unpaid forced labor, abuse, and an internalized attitude by each of the two communities. From the Bantu side it is a feeling of superiority and disdain for the Pygmies, and from the Pygmy side a feeling of inferiority and disregard for oneself, escapism and a passive attitude. The Pygmies are dependent on the Bantu in terms of food as soon as resources become scarce. In addition, the transition is difficult from living a daily life as hunter-gatherers as opposed to foresight and planning which are necessary for successful agriculture. This is why most Pygmies have the mindset of a day laborer rather than one of a farmer, a mindset which promotes the search for a daily income as opposed to a long term investment which could provide more food security (i.e., the long term gain of larger fields vs. the short term advantage of smaller parcels of land which are less time consuming to maintain). Finally, there is a tendency of some Bantu to exploit Pygmy labor with no or low pay, which limits their access to public services such as healthcare or education, which cost money.

As noted in World Bank (2009), the loss of or limited access to natural resources as well as their gradual depletion is also affecting the Pygmies. This loss is caused by a range of factors including the proliferation of cut-and-burn agriculture on the Pygmies' traditional hunting territories; the non-recognition of their customary rights of use; the dependence on Bantu landowners for using any kind of natural resources including agricultural resources; the creation of wildlife reserves; logging concessions; artisanal logging in vital Pygmy territories; oil extraction in the Cuvette Centrale as well as the possible resumption of large-scale plantations (private Chinese and European projects currently under preparation); artisanal or industrial mining in the same territories; and demographic pressure. The Pygmies also suffer from a loss of identity and cultural heritage through religious proselytism and conformism with the Bantu or global society, the dissemination of contagious diseases which their traditional medicine cannot heal, especially STDs but also tuberculosis; and the consumption of alcohol and cannabis which has become a common phenomenon and exacerbates all of the above mentioned problems. The combination of these factors is causing a loss of resources, a lack of food security, a lack of capacities and a loss of cultural heritage for the Pygmies. The war may also have contributed to the impoverishment and abuse of the Pygmies.

**Table 4: Poverty and Human Development Indicators in the National 123 Household Survey, DRC 2005**

	Number of households	Number of individuals	Weighted number of households	Weighted number of individuals	Share of rural population	Share of female population	Average age of individuals	Median age of individuals	Share of female-headed households
Non-Pygmys	11,930	64,454	10,240,496	54,190,264	70.0	50.4	20.9	16.0	17.1
Pygmies	29	110	19,828	63,097	95.0	51.6	26.7	24.0	6.6
All	11,959	64,564	10,260,324	54,253,361	70.1	50.4	20.9	16.0	17.0

  

	Average age of household head	Average household size	School enrollment rate (6-11 years)	Literacy rate (15+ years)	Labor force participation rate (15+ years)	Unemployment rate (15+ years)	Share working in informal sector	Poverty incidence (headcount)	Poverty gap	Squared poverty gap
Non-Pygmys	43.3	5.3	56.1	65.0	73.8	6.2	90.2	71.7	32.4	18.1
Pygmies	41.7	3.2	18.7	30.5	85.9	1.0	100.0	84.8	39.4	25.1
All	43.3	5.3	56.0	64.9	73.8	6.2	90.2	71.7	32.3	18.0

Source: Authors' estimation



## 4. Human development

### 4.1. Quantitative evidence from CAR and Gabon on education

The Census data for the CAR and Gabon suggests that enrollment rates and attainment are much lower among the Pygmies than among other groups (see tables 5a and 5b). In addition, the average years of schooling among indigenous adult populations in Gabon is 3 years for men, and 2.8 years for women, versus 6.5 years for both genders in the non-indigenous population. In the CAR, the average number of years of schooling is 0.3 years for men and 0.1 year for women among indigenous groups, versus 2.8 years for men and 1.4 years for women among the non-indigenous. Regression analysis shows that being indigenous, controlling for other observable characteristics such as household composition, age, geographic location, etc., leads to substantial and statistically significant gaps in education attainment. Indigenous children are also more likely to be older than non-indigenous children in any one grade. As a result of limited schooling, indigenous individuals are much more likely to be illiterate (see tables 6a and 6b).

**Table 5a: Gender and educational attainment (15 years and older) in Gabon**

	Indigenous			Non-indigenous			All
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All	
Still in school (%)	6.7	3.4	5	21.9	22.3	22.1	22.1
	If not in school, highest achievement						
None	66.4	67.4	66.9	14.1	21.4	17.7	17.8
Incomplete Primary	23.4	24.2	23.8	11.3	15.7	13.5	13.5
Complete Primary	7.4	1.4	4.3	13.3	16.3	14.8	14.8
Secondary	1	0.5	0.7	43.4	34.7	39.1	39
University	0.3	0	0.1	9.6	3.9	6.8	6.8

Source. RGPB 2003, Gabon

**Table 5b: Gender and educational attainment (15 years and older) in CAR**

	Mbororo			Pygmy			Non indigenous			All		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
Still in school (%)	2.6	1.0	1.8	3.6	1.1	2.3	13.5	7.0	10.2	13.4	6.9	10.1
	If not in school, highest achievement											
None	93.8	97.3	95.5	86.3	93.6	90.1	41.3	66.1	53.9	41.9	66.4	54.4
Incomplete Primary	2.7	1.3	2.0	11.3	5.7	8.4	19.8	14.5	17.1	19.6	14.3	16.9
Complete Primary	1.3	0.5	0.9	1.5	0.2	0.9	12.4	6.7	9.4	12.2	6.6	9.3
Secondary	2.1	0.9	1.5	0.7	0.4	0.5	24.3	12.2	18.2	24.1	12.1	17.9
University	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	2.2	0.5	1.3	2.1	0.5	1.3

Source. RGPB 2003, CAR

**Table 6a: Illiteracy rates in Gabon**

	Total Population			Indigenous		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Age 10 to 14	17.6	18.5	16.7	93.8	92.9	94.7
15-19	7.1	6.5	7.8	75.8	77.4	74.6
20-24	8.7	8.3	9.1	82.2	73.9	89.1
25-29	11	11.6	10.5	92.2	86.4	95.2
30-34	12.2	13.4	11.4	89.6	76	96.2
35-39	14.2	15.1	13.8	95.9	95.5	96.1
40-44	17.1	16.8	17.3	97.8	94.4	100
45-49	21.7	17.9	23.4	88	71.4	94.4
50-54	33.6	20.9	39	94.4	85.7	96.6
55-59	53.1	29	61.6	92	33.3	100
60-64	71.9	42.6	80.3	100	100	100
65-69	80.6	53.9	87.4	100	100	100
Urban (aged 15-69)	12.6	10.5	14	77.6	60	86.3
Rural (aged 15-69)	32.3	19.5	39.5	89.8	84.2	92.9

Source : Authors' estimations

**Table 6b: Illiteracy rates in CAR**

	Male				Female				All			
	Mbororos	Pygmy	Non-indigenous	All	Mbororos	Pygmy	Non-indigenous	All	Mbororos	Pygmy	Non-indigenous	All
Age 10 to 14	79.9	89.9	55.2	55.5	82.5	90.8	62.9	63.2	81.1	90.3	58.9	59.3
15-19	75.9	88.7	42.9	43.3	83.1	91.7	60.2	60.5	79.7	90.3	52.0	52.4
20-24	73.0	82.6	40.9	41.3	83.8	93.4	61.4	61.7	79.0	88.4	51.6	51.9
25-29	74.6	88.8	40.0	40.4	85.8	93.2	63.9	64.2	80.8	91.3	51.9	52.3
30-34	77.0	89.9	39.4	39.9	86.6	95.9	66.6	66.9	82.1	93.0	52.6	53.1
35-39	75.9	89.4	39.7	40.2	87.7	96.4	68.9	69.2	82.1	93.0	54.3	54.6
40-44	74.0	92.1	40.7	41.3	87.3	96.5	72.7	72.9	80.2	94.2	56.6	57.0
45-49	74.2	92.4	41.2	41.7	88.9	94.0	76.9	77.1	80.1	93.1	59.1	59.3
50-54	77.8	93.1	46.7	47.2	90.1	94.9	83.1	83.2	83.0	94.0	65.6	65.8
55-59	79.4	94.9	54.1	54.5	87.7	100.0	87.1	87.2	82.2	97.4	71.1	71.3
60-64	81.8	96.7	65.4	65.7	91.8	95.3	90.5	90.5	85.8	96.1	79.2	79.3
65-69	83.2	93.6	70.2	70.4	91.4	95.1	91.5	91.6	86.0	94.4	82.1	82.2
Urban (aged 15-69)	54.2	75.4	23.6	23.7	64.5	79.0	44.7	44.8	59.4	77.3	34.2	34.3
Rural (aged 15-69)	77.3	89.9	55.6	56.0	87.3	94.9	82.8	82.9	82.3	92.5	69.6	69.9

Source : Authors' estimations

#### **4.2. *Qualitative evidence from the DRC on education and health***

The data presented earlier for the DRC suggests that the rate of school enrollment among children from six to eleven years of age is extremely low among Pygmies at 18.7 percent, versus 56.1 percent for the rest of the population. Only 30.5 percent of the Pygmies aged 15 years or above are literate, versus 65.0 percent for the rest of the population. This is in part because the Pygmies only receive education that is provided on a community level. The fact that school enrollment rates are very low (especially for secondary education) despite the fact that most Pygmies are sedentarized and have been living close to Bantu villages for at least 15 years suggests that the Pygmies have limited access to public schools, even if they live close to Bantu villages. Those who live in camps or villages a little further away rarely have schools at all and if they do, they are in poor condition.

Qualitative data from the DRC Pygmy strategy suggest several reasons for low enrollment and literacy rates among Pygmies. Education is not free in the DRC. While teacher salaries are paid by the state (if schools are part of the Education Nationale and teachers are “conventionnés”, i.e., officially recognized by the state through ad hoc conventions), it is frequently the case that half or more of a school’s teachers are paid by parents. Fieldwork shows that many Pygmy parents who aspire to give their children a good education do not have the means to pay for it. In addition, in both public and private schools, teachers’ and Bantu children’s attitudes toward Pygmy children are negative (rejection, denigration) because they do not have school uniforms, pens or books which “discourages the latter and is the cause for a grave inferiority complex”. Fieldwork suggests that this inferiority complex has been internalized by some communities. The rather erratic school attendance of Pygmy children does not help either. Necessary trips to the forest for several days or weeks can occur at any time for all sorts of vital reasons. Thus they frequently miss lessons which make it hard for them to succeed in school. Additionally, their parents and community members have received limited education themselves or are illiterate and do not speak the taught language, French. War, premature marriages, alcoholism and cannabis addiction (of both parents and children) aggravate this. This lack of education is a major obstacle in terms of leadership, relations with the administration and their environment, and access to basic education.

The Pygmies’ status and access to health services is also poorly documented, but results from fieldwork in the DRC suggest that the Pygmies do not have access to primary health care and mainly use traditional medicine; they are worse off than the Bantu whose access to primary health care is also poor, especially in the forest regions; and many diseases affect them more than other population groups, especially tropical parasitoses, STDs, tuberculosis, infectious diseases, respiratory diseases, and infantile infectious diseases. In addition, Pygmy women suffer from a higher mortality rate at birth. All of this is partly due to their lifestyle, especially to poor hygiene, consumption of unclean water, promiscuity, and smoke-infested houses, but also their exclusion from the healthcare system. They are less well informed about diseases and their transmission than the Bantu, vaccination campaigns do not reach or target them, and they do not have access to health infrastructure or medication. This is valid for nomadic, semi-nomadic, and sedentarized Pygmies.

Again, there are several reasons for the poor health outcomes observed among Pygmies. This includes their isolation which makes health care provision for them very expensive; malnutrition caused by monotone and poor diets for sedentary Pygmies; the predominance of cultural habits, some of which are guided by religious beliefs, as well as of other habits such as premature marriages, the consumption of alcohol, the lack of hygiene, giving birth within the camps and a preference for their traditional medicine etc. Although their traditional medicine is based on a rich pharmacopeia and their knowledge of medicinal plants used to be an advantage over the Bantu who would seek their medical help, it also has its limits especially in combating diseases like AIDS or STDs. Their high degree of poverty makes it impossible for them to pay for treatments or medication. In addition, their mistrust or fear of Bantu health

care officials (and vice versa) as well as the contemptuous and discriminatory attitude of the latter (exclusion during the distribution of mosquito nets or the scheduling of vaccinations) and sexual abuse which many Pygmy women suffer from all have contributed to poor health outcomes including the dissemination of STDs in Pygmy communities. The result of insufficient primary healthcare is a high infant mortality rate, particularly during birth and a low life expectancy, especially compared to the Bantu. Again, while there are no official numbers or scientific studies to back up these findings, there is a clear consensus between both Bantu and Pygmies that health indicators are much worse for the Pygmies.

## 5. Livelihoods, labor market participation and employment

### 5.1. Quantitative evidence from CAR and Gabon

Data are available in the Gabon and CAR census on labor force participation and employment (including for children), and on sector of employment. As shown in table 7, labor force participation rates are higher among Pygmies (in large part due to a higher share of women willing to work), and unemployment is lower, probably in part because the Pygmies are so poor that they cannot afford not to work. The share of workers who are not paid for their work is also much larger among the Pygmies than the rest of the population, which contributes to higher levels of poverty. Tables 8a and 8b provide data on sectors of employment. The Pygmies tend to work more in agriculture than other groups, which is not surprising, and in the case of Gabon, a substantial share are employed by providing services to other households, including domestic work. The data also suggests that the incidence of child labor is significantly higher among Pygmies than among other groups. Thus, while the Pygmies are much poorer than other groups they also seem to work harder according to the data available (but we do not have data on time use and the number of hours worked).

**Table 7: Labor Force Participation, Unemployment and Unpaid Work, Gabon and CAR**

	Gabon			CAR			
	Indigenous	Non-indigenous	All	Mbororos	Pygmy	Non-indigenous	All
<b>Labor Force Participation Rate</b>							
Male	71.4	50	50.1	81.1	70.9	74.4	74.5
Female	67.9	41.2	41.2	38.4	56.7	58.7	58.5
<b>Unemployment Rate</b>							
Male	2	14.1	14.1	4.6	7.8	9.7	9.7
Female	1.5	13.6	13.6	5.9	2.7	5	5
<b>% Unpaid workers</b>							
Male	12	3.5	3.5	8.7	3.7	4.1	4.2
Female	12.9	4.4	4.4	14.6	10.8	8.5	8.5

Source : Authors' estimates using RGPH 2003, CAR et RGPH 2003, Gabon

**Table 8a: Employment by Sector, Gabon**

	Indigenous	Non indigenous	All.
<b>Gabon</b>			
Agriculture	23.2	8.8	8.8
Mining/Manufacturing	0.0	3.6	3.6
Utilities/Construction	1.0	2.5	2.5
Commerce	0.2	4.8	4.8
Services to household	72.6	33.4	33.5
Household as employers	0.2	15.6	15.6
Other Services	2.7	31.3	31.2
All sectors	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Authors' estimates using RGPH 2003, Gabon

**Table 8b: Employment by Sector, CAR**

	Mbororos	Pygmy	Non-indigenous	All
Agriculture	80.8	95.3	76.4	76.5
Mining	1.5	1.6	2.7	2.7
Manufacturing	0.3	0.1	1.0	1.0
Utilities	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1
Commerce	13.0	0.9	9.9	9.9
Services	4.4	2.1	9.9	9.9
All sectors	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Authors' estimates using RGPH 2003, CAR

## 5.2. *Qualitative evidence from the DRC*

The qualitative evidence from the DRC provides more information on the type of work and sources of livelihood of Pygmies. As mentioned earlier, the Pygmies used to lead lives of hunter-gatherers in the rain forest. They were nomadic and moved on to new hunting grounds as soon as they have used up the resources in a specific area. They were also trading food with the Bantu such as agricultural products against their hunting, fishing and gathering products. Yet Pygmy sedentarization started with early colonization and this process was encouraged by the authorities and by Pygmy Support NGOs (Nzita 2005). Sedentarization is more generally the result of a number of factors: demographic pressure of both Pygmies and Bantu which reduces the living space and creates a greater dependency on agriculture; the Pygmies' own aspirations to change their lives; and pressure from the Bantu society which is leading to a socio-cultural homogenization (religious and behavioral).

Today, large parts of the sedentarized population are agriculturalists. They sometimes own small parcels of land but mainly work as farm hands for the Bantu with whom they live. In the first stage of the "sedentarization cycle" the Pygmies offer labor to the Bantu. The cycle then continues with the creation of small fields as Pygmy groups permanently settle down in the periphery of Bantu villages, first at a distance (1 to 2 km), then closer. In the most advanced cases of sedentarization Pygmies may have camps that are the same size as the Bantu's (for instance in Bikoro). But agriculture is also a constraint that hinders the Pygmies from going too far away from their camps (for hunting or gathering) and therefore increases pressure on the closest forest. It is de facto turning into an "open" forest, to which everyone has access (Thomas et al. 1983). Consequently, the Bantu are increasingly hunting in these "open forests" which reduces their need for trading food with the Pygmies.

The level of sedentarization varies greatly from group to group. The Mbuti Pygmy of Province Orientale manage to leave their camps for between one to two-thirds of the time over periods of several months. Others, for instance in the riverside villages of the Virunga Park, have completely ceased to be nomadic and rely entirely on agriculture, manual labor for the Bantu and craftsmanship for income and food. Thomas et al. (1983) note that income opportunities are good for those Pygmy groups that still have the possibility to hunt, as the market for bush and game meat is particularly easy to access everywhere in the DRC.

Table 1 provided earlier basic information on the likely distribution of the Pygmies today in the DRC according to three categories: nomadic, sedentary or in the process of sedentarization. The term nomad describes Pygmies who move in a certain hunting ground. They can also be characterized using two other criteria: the predominance of hunting and gathering in their activities and for food procurement, and the fact that they do not have permanent camps close to Bantu villages and roads. Most sedentary Pygmies permanently live in villages that are constructed in a similar way to Bantu villages. They mainly farm - either their own land of which the size increases over time, or for Bantu agriculturalists. They depend entirely on agriculture for food supply. They may also hunt but this is no longer a determining factor in their diet. Between these two extremes, a process of sedentarization that is more or less advanced is under way (more or less time of the year spent in the forest, higher or lower dependence on its resources, Pygmies living in the vicinity of mining activities to provide labor or bush meat for miners).

Table 1 suggests that today the Pygmies in the DRC are mostly semi-sedentary or semi-nomad and depend on agriculture at least as much as on hunting. Within the framework of this study, it was not possible to determine the number of true nomads, but it is very likely that they are no more than 30,000 to 40,000 people, less than 10% of all Pygmies. It is equally difficult to establish the number of fully sedentarized Pygmies (those that have stopped hunting altogether). Still, these results modify the widespread image of Pygmies as forest nomads with limited contact with the Bantu and as generally keeping their distance from the outside world. In most cases, Pygmies live close to the Bantu and are in the process of becoming agriculturalists, craftsmen, laborers or miners while maintaining activities linked to their old lifestyles at varying degrees. In certain cases their link to the forest is nearly or completely severed (Rutshuru, Masisi and a large part of the Tanganyika district, Katanga province). The majority of Pygmies today are thus semi nomads whose ties to a certain area depend on the possibilities of shorter or longer trips to the forest and on work opportunities (plantations, big agricultural campaigns, mining etc.).

Whether they are nomadic, semi-sedentarized or sedentarized, the Pygmies' income opportunities are bleak. Their labor is paid at a very low rate and often they are forced to work without payment. In the best cases they receive about half of what a Bantu laborer would get paid, generating a monthly income of only \$20 per household. Pressure on natural resources affects their main source of income: cut and burn agriculture which is spreading out further into the forests, logging which makes it impossible for them to farm and issues them a de facto useless hunting right (Forestry Code), artisanal mining, excessive hunting or fishing to which they often contribute in order to satisfy the demand for game meat (for miner households, logging camps, villages and cities). Their lack of capital makes the utilization of the forest very difficult (artisanal logging, mining). They are incapable of obtaining official or customary rights of use (administrative procedures are too complicated for mining permits, objections of Bantu chiefs) and incapable of investing in the necessary equipment. In and around the National Parks they are forced to become poachers and beggars, are often subject to bullying, and often lose all access to land. They are not very apt at farming and, since they mostly tend to other people's fields, only own very small parcels of land which their 'master' can harvest without their authorization. And wherever land is not abundant, they have difficult access to it. While land is available in the Congo River basin and its margins, in the distant peripheries of the towns and cities, in the Kivu Mountains and Katanga savannahs, or wherever the population density is above 50 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>, they are the last ones to obtain parcels of land.

## **6. Social exclusion and lack of rights: the case of the DRC**

### **6.1. Abuse and social exclusion**

In the rest of this paper, our evidence is based on the DRC only since census data do not provide much direct information on social exclusion and basic rights. As before, this summary of the existing qualitative evidence is based on World Bank (2009). According to the findings from the DRC fieldwork, many Pygmies claim to suffer from abuse. This includes forced labor and rape. In addition, their harvest is often stolen from their own fields, their hunting and gathering equipment is seized. All this is a “custom”, meaning that it is perceived as appropriate and normal. To try and resist it would equal a rebellion for the Pygmies and they could be tried by customary Bantu tribunals. Trials are usually to their disadvantage and punishments are often cruel. Many Bantu and some law enforcement agents find it normal to benefit from this. Reversing these mental schemes and behavior is a complex undertaking and requires the recognition and affirmation of the Pygmies’ human rights by the Bantu and the state. To date, Pygmies are often not considered to be “normal human beings” and this is the justification for the abuse that they suffer at the hands of the Bantu.

The social, political and cultural domination of the Pygmies by the Bantu takes many different forms. Some situations resemble slavery when the Bantus speak of “their Pygmies”; the only missing characteristic that distinguishes this situation from slavery is that they cannot be bought or sold. Pygmies do not own the natural resources they exploit; they have access to these resources against the payment of a tribute. They only obtain farming land temporarily if it is abundant while the Bantu owner retains the right to take their harvest. If selling the land in question or any other element related to it has to be negotiated, this is done without consulting the Pygmies. Although there are strong taboos that forbid sexual relations between members of the two communities (sanction of being dishonored), they are basically ignored or lifted in most provinces especially within sedentarized communities. The consequences are often rape or imposed sexual relations from a very young age between Pygmy women and girls and Bantu men.

The archetypical Pygmy (as seen by many Bantu) has mainly negative characteristics: he is fearful, a liar, dirty, a thief etc. His positive characteristics include: a hard worker, good for doing the dirtiest and hardest work for free or cheap, knows nature very well, dances and sings very well and is a good craftsman. But a Bantu would seldom sit down and eat with a Pygmy. The Pygmies’ own culture is itself slowly vanishing under the influence of Bantu societal norms: religion, lifestyle, habitat, behavior. The Bantu, as the dominant majority, seldom accept the uniqueness of the Pygmies and previous positive links between the two communities such as links between rites and religious beliefs, the dependency on pharmaceutical knowledge, trade of agricultural products against hunting produce, etc., are eroding.

All this is happening in a context where the Bantu lifestyle is highly appreciated by the Pygmies: they respect the Bantu and want to be like them. However, there also is a strong resistance against the Bantu culture which might be a reflection of necessity: it is not easy for the Pygmies to totally resemble the Bantu. In some instances the Pygmies see themselves as living in shame and “trying to hide” (their nudity for instance). They want to imitate the Bantu way of living with all of its attributes. Yet sedentarization is only very slowly resulting in the adoption of Bantu social norms by the Pygmies. When it comes to housing and hygiene for instance, the Pygmies continue to build simple huts even though the more solid clay Bantu houses they are imitating are literally right next door in the neighboring villages. It is not possible to invoke poverty or ignorance as reasons for the poor imitation of these houses: building clay houses only requires unpaid, individual labor. Hygiene is another issue where the adoption of existing Bantu norms should be easy but is not being done (and it is ostensibly for hygienic reasons that



Pygmies are banished from the common wells, schools etc.). Another example is the use of kitchenware: if the Pygmies own it, they save it for (foreign) visitors rather than using it themselves.

The Pygmies remain much attached to their ancient lifestyle and poverty alone does not explain the preservation of this lifestyle. Their cultural model resists change for social reasons. By imitating the others, they distance themselves from their own group, a source of tension both from within their own group and from the Bantu “masters”. This leads to a more general point about the acculturation of the Pygmies. In the past years acculturation was strongly advocated, to facilitate the Pygmies access to public services for instance. However, this has become somewhat controversial and the question is whether a more measured approach should be adopted, endorsing choice and alternatives to sedentarization, as well as the survival of cultural heritage. Still, change is taking place. The Pygmies are becoming more attracted to areas that offer opportunities, frequently around roads, rather than Bantu villages, because it is possible to find work there and sell products. Yet, they maintain a profound cultural identity to which they remain attached and preserve their beliefs, techniques and cultural knowledge. Hence the process of progressive sedentarization by no means equates with integration into the Bantu society, where the Pygmies remain marginalized.

The traditional Pygmy culture is thus a threatened culture<sup>1</sup>. The majority of the Congo’s Pygmies are in the process of acculturation, and one of the most influential factors in this process is Christianization. The hearts of the Pygmy culture, animist beliefs, are under pressure from missionary clerics, especially from Congolese churches of the Awakening. Observers suggest that for most Pygmies the Christian religion is merely a cover under which they still maintain and practice their beliefs in their ancestors and the spirit of the rain forest. This combination of belief systems might not last much longer. The Bantu are exerting an undeniable pressure on the Pygmies to finally become their “Brothers in Christ” and resisting this pressure is perceived as disdainful and archaic. The Christian beliefs have had very little impact on the nomadic pygmies, for instance the Sankuru, who are widely scattered. But even for the sedentary Pygmies, animism remains very important. Contrary to most other Congolese, animist rituals are widely accepted, from circumcision to initiation, birth and marriage rituals, as well as hunting rites such as calling the game.

## **6.2. *Lack of access to land and forests***

The Pygmies’ income depends entirely on their access to natural resources. The main cause of their gradual sedentarization (itself the cause of endemic malnutrition) is an increasingly limited access to these resources, as well as their general degradation, for instance the decreasing numbers of game and wild life. These are most likely also the reasons for their desire for better living conditions and income opportunities that the proximity of Bantu settlements and roads provide. Paradoxically, their sedentarization leads to impoverishment and a deterioration of their living conditions.

The Pygmies have their own customary rights of use for their forest “territories”, but the Bantu with whom they share these territories do not recognize these customary rights. In fact, the concerned areas are actually owned by the Bantu, Sudanese or Nilotic people according to their own customary law which is recognized by the state. The state does not recognize the customary rights of Pygmies. The “owners” of these territories may grant the Pygmies rights of use, as long as they do not conflict with their own

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<sup>1</sup> The traditional knowledge of nature is the most advanced and conserved in nomadic communities. It is possible that poverty, which makes Pygmies use only their traditional medicine to treat ailments is helping to preserve their traditional medicine/pharmacopeia. But their music is gradually disappearing from sedentary camps. Nomads have managed to preserve hunting techniques, whereas sedentary Pygmies, especially around Virunga Park and in Kalemie, only hunt very rarely and their techniques are slowly being lost. On the other hand, arts and crafts such as pottery, braiding and weaving are flourishing, and the Pygmies are known for the high quality of their work.

interests or they can benefit from it (e.g., by receiving tributes in the form of game meat, etc.). But as soon as that changes, the Pygmies can be driven from the land; their customary rights of use are not legally binding and cannot be defended in court. And even if they had access to the legal system, Pygmies would be constrained by the power imbalance and their limited influence and experience with the legal system.

This is equally true for forest resources as well as access to soil and farmland. From one day to another a Bantu “owner” can stop Pygmies from using “his” natural resources. Thus, in all areas where the demographic pressure increases or new economic opportunities arise – such as mining, artisanal or industrial logging or plantations – the Pygmies are increasingly compelled to work as underpaid day laborers. In terms of access to land, the Pygmies’ situation does not differ from the situation of migrants of other ethnic groups who are quite numerous in the DRC. The significant difference between these two groups is that the Pygmies have been present in their territories for millennia. Another threat in terms of access to natural resources which has arisen throughout the 20th century is the creation of National Parks (e.g. Virunga National Park). All human exploitation of natural resources, including hunting, is forbidden inside these parks and thus entire Pygmy groups have been driven from their ancestral homeland and pushed back to the surrounding areas of the Park, becoming poachers in the eye of the law without any compensation<sup>2</sup>.

Because the Pygmies are usually not considered to be the traditional owners of land or resources in the DRC, they have slowly lost their ancient rights of use in the sense that they have been chased deeper into the forest or been invaded by or integrated into Bantu, Sudanese or Nilotic societies. The forest itself has gradually been claimed and appropriated by their invaders. In these territories and within this legal framework, the Pygmies have thus only acquired or preserved rights of use that are linked to servitude. Every forest in the DRC has a customary owner who is not Pygmy. This owner can tolerate and for that matter benefit from Pygmy presence in “his” forest (for instance as hunters and meat providers) but he can also use the forest for other purposes including concessions or conceding rights of use to other uses such as logging or mining rights). They do not have to consult the Pygmies at all and the law does not require them to do so, even if the Pygmies have been residing in the forest long before them. This is also true for every other Congolese migrant who is settling down in an area he does not originate from: he can obtain rights of use from the customary owner for natural resources (land and forest) but these rights can be withdrawn unless he obtains a concessionary right which is recognized by the state.

The Pygmies thus live on the land of others, just like migrants. Their rights of use are always linked to the payments of returns to the customary owner. In addition, the customary rights of Bantu owners were initially merely clan rights for the operation of communal land. However, they have slowly turned into patrimonial rights for the chief and his lineage. The chief can make use of his rights as he wishes and dispossess himself and all the members of his clan (to their detriment) by selling “his” land. These patrimonial ties which have been reinforced by the Land Act are the cause of a large number of expropriations in DRC and have been the reason for many violent conflicts.

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<sup>2</sup> The Congolese Land Act (Loi Foncière), Bagajika, of 1973, which was amended and completed in 1981, stipulates that all the national territory belongs to the state. Concessionary dispositions however, allow for private land ownership both in urban and rural areas. These clauses have recently been complemented with the Forestry Code (Code Forestier) and the Mining Code (Code Minier). Apart from these concessions (rural, urban, forest and mines), customary law applies, even if the resources in question can be subject to concessions at all times. To date, no concessionary transaction has taken place in the DRC without the traditional owners receiving something in return for their land and therefore de facto selling their property. Usually land is bought from the customary owner and then registered as private property.

The Forestry Code does not distinguish between rights of use and customary property rights, a distinction which is crucial for customary law, since the state is the owner of the forest according to the Code. Thus the Forestry Code recognizes customary rights of use but does not clarify how the custom defines them. Also, Article 37 outlaws all commercial activities, thus hunting, in protected forests and production forests. The Forestry Code distinguishes between classified forests (which make up 15% of the national territory), protected forests and production forests. The latter are part of the protected areas that have been made industrial concessions, either through tendering or conversion, or community concessions (by presidential decree). Hunting is forbidden in classified forests and agriculture is forbidden in forestry concession zones. Pygmies are basically forbidden to commercialize the products of their main activity, hunting, and they cannot farm in forest concessions which they would need to do for their survival since the noise from the engines chases away wild life and makes hunting extremely difficult. Their only choice is to leave the area.

Another obstacle for the Pygmies is linked to the concept of “community forest concessions”. This is where the notion of customary property resurfaces. Article 22 of the Code stipulates: “A local community may, upon request, obtain through a forest concession part of or an entire protected forest among the forests that are regularly owned under customary law. The modalities of the attribution of such a concession to a community are determined by presidential decree. The attribution is free.” This article very clearly excludes any community forest concession to the benefit of the Pygmies simply because the Pygmies generally do not own forests according to customary law. The attribution by presidential decree politicizes the debate on a high political level and is an additional obstacle for the Pygmies.

It has to be emphasized that the zoning process is necessary prior to any new concession of forest territory (therefore the necessary extension of the moratorium). Because of the Code the Pygmies main source of income, hunting, is placed under surveillance and their main substitutive activity, agriculture, is forbidden in the concessions and protected areas. Every zoning process therefore has to take Pygmy interests into consideration and reserve special areas for them for hunting and agriculture. Another issue that has arisen due to the Forestry Code concerns the cahier de charges, that is the social responsibility and investments that logging companies have to make for local communities. It is important to ensure that the Pygmies will benefit from them, so that their signature is essential for the validation of each cahier des charges.

### **6.3. *Lack of institutional representation***

Pygmy participation in the administration is weak in the DRC. Contrary to the Bantu, whose villages are linked to “localités” that are recognized as administrative entities by the state, Pygmy camps are not. From the viewpoint of the administration they are considered as hamlets in a Bantu, Sudanese or Nilotic “localité”. In order to understand the difference one has to come back to the different social structures and administrative history of the different components of Congolese society. Social organization in chiefdoms is a Bantu, Sudanese or Nilotic institution. Today the division of the entire Congolese territory and the appropriation of land is based on chiefdoms, to the detriment of older forms of social organization such as the Pygmies’. The colonial administration was built on the customary Bantu land division to create administrative districts, groupements and chiefdoms or sectors. In the Congolese system, groupements are nearly always headed by representatives of the traditional chief, mostly of the chiefdom-sectors. “Localité” chiefs are nearly always appointed by the groupement chiefs.

The customary and administrative systems are therefore closely intertwined. The chief of the “localité” could be the chief of a certain parcel of land or the representative of the chiefdom or groupement chief (being chief over land can be distinct from political chiefdom in some cases) or even a person nominated by the sector chief (who is not part of the customary hierarchy) but in this case that person is still linked to the customary system in most cases. The Pygmies who never had and still do not have hereditary chiefs are therefore excluded from the political and administrative system. However, the recognition of

administrative interlocutors for the Pygmy communities is beginning to emerge. In some cases, the Bantu “localité” chiefs nominate representatives for the Pygmy neighborhoods, hamlets or villages, and these representatives become de facto “localité” chiefs themselves. As such, they are the main contact person for the Pygmies, not only for liaison with the official Bantu “localité” chiefs, but also as a leader and a contact point with the outside world. Often, they already have a prominent position within their own communities which is why they are acknowledged and accepted as representatives of the “localité” chiefs.

This “localité chieftdom” is not of a territorial nature, i.e., it is not associated with particular land rights or access to natural resources in specific areas. It is rather a position of leadership and representation. This process of delegation is even common for some nomadic pygmies or in areas where Pygmies are relatively most numerous. In addition, the sector administration may recognize people who have been chosen by the communities themselves as groupement chiefs for several camps. Thus, non hereditary and non official administrative structures that are tied to communities and not land are gradually being put in place. These para-administrations which have no control over land in terms of ownership and distribution are nevertheless being mainstreamed and established through a double process of acknowledgement from above by the official administration and from below by Pygmy communities.

Representation of the Pygmies in the provision of public services is close to non-existent, except in the “territories” of Equateur Sud (Bikoro, Ingende) where better educated and more numerous Pygmies have been able to overcome their “shyness” and the disdain of others and have representatives within the technical services. However, with a few exceptions they do not have many responsibilities. Participation in Civil Society institutions is also very weak, including NGOs. The survey did not look at Pygmy staff in Pygmy support NGOs, but it is known, that their numbers are very low. Pastors and clergymen charged with the Christianization of the Pygmies seldom belong to the Pygmy communities.

Pygmies’ participation in the most recent elections was high, which suggests that the Pygmies are willing to be part of society. The affirmation of their citizenship by the Independent Electoral Commission (and the Constitution) through the distribution of voting papers and the act of voting itself, has been perceived as a recognition of their individual and communal citizenship and therefore has had a considerable political and psychological impact. Yet although the Pygmies seem eager to vote, Pygmy candidates in elections are rare, even in areas where Pygmies are a majority. However, the number of candidates for the 2006 provincial parliamentary elections increased in areas with higher Pygmy populations, even if none of the candidates were successful. Fieldwork suggests that several Pygmy candidates will be running for the sector elections in Katanga and Equateur Sud, which points to a gradual emergence of greater political awareness and desire to be active participants in the political process. Thus while for now elections remain subject to manipulations and clientelism by Bantu politicians, Pygmy leaders are slowly emerging at the “localities” level, a trend which may continue in those districts with a proportionally high Pygmy population (more than 30%): the three Equateur Districts and Mai Ndombe (Ingende, Bikoro and Koro), Mambasa in Province Orientale and Kalemie and Manono in the Tanganyika Nyunzu.

#### ***6.4. Lack of citizenship and registration***

Formal identification in the DRC can only be received after obtaining a birth certificate and getting registered. This is a prerequisite in order to be able to benefit from all rights linked to citizenship, like the right to vote. As a result, Pygmies are rarely legal citizens. Births, marriages and deaths are seldom registered in the nearest civil registry office. This is true for all provinces and also for the Bantu, albeit to a lesser degree than for the Pygmies. Most IDs provided for all kinds of administrative requirements are counterfeit in rural areas. This is often due to the fact that births are seldom registered in conformity with the schedule fixed by the law (they are either registered late or not at all). Deaths also are rarely registered.

The fieldwork provides a number of possible explanations for the low Pygmy registration rates including the distance to the civil registry offices, poverty (fees have to be paid for the registration and stamp), and the attitude of civil servants who like to keep them at distance from their offices. For example, the sector's civil registry offices are sometimes more than a 100km away from Pygmy camps and villages. The territorial administration had originally established registration at the village level, by the "localité" chief. A number of chiefs do it in certain provinces, sometimes even with a lot of diligence and rigor, but it is not widespread. Citizenship cannot be accorded to all citizens, especially in rural areas, in an effective and reliable fashion if registrations are not done at the village level since many villages are remote and too far away from sector offices. This in return increases the opportunity and financial cost of registrations which many poor families are not willing to pay. Data collected at village level could simply be transferred to the census agents at the sector level. Currently however, registration is perceived as an additional tax by the population, which is why they try to evade it, and as an additional source of income for the civil servants, which is why they do not have any interest in decentralizing it to "localité" chiefs. This makes it impossible to increase the number of registrations and make them more systematic. In addition, fieldwork has shown that there is certain mistrust towards what is perceived as "Bantu power" and therefore the agents of the state.

## **7. Conclusion**

This study has demonstrated that the Pygmies in Central Africa not only tend to live in extreme poverty, but as importantly, qualitative evidence indicates they are often the victims of prejudice. Many aspects of the Pygmies living conditions which are directly linked to their traditional lifestyle are considered by other groups such as the Bantu to be an example of a lifestyle that is "dedicated to suffering". Their hardiness is seen as an adaptation to a "life of shortages". They lack drinking water, sufficient and diversified food, soap, solid houses that can protect them against bad weather, hygiene (body, clothes, housing), commodities, presentable clothes and shoes. The study also suggests that this negative image is increasingly becoming the way that the Pygmies see themselves too. They wish to make up for "their shortcomings" and when asked, individually or in groups, they respond that they want to be "like them" (the Bantu).

There is thus a fundamental ambiguity in the Pygmies' position towards their own culture and identity. This culture and identity is a symbol for archaism and often the reason for their marginalization by many Bantu. At the same time, the Pygmies are also seen to embody a valuable cultural heritage that should be protected and preserved. Their culture embodies one of the most original forms of human adaptation to the particular ecological conditions of the rain forest. They have a sophisticated knowledge of their environment and the possibilities for humans to adapt to it in a sustainable manner. They also have valuable cultural and artistic skills which are a major component of their countries' heritage

It is clear that the Pygmies are in the process of an accelerated integration into the broader society through their sedentarization. As an unmanaged process with little input from the Pygmy themselves, sedentarization of the Pygmies to date has been intimately linked to their impoverishment, exploitation and poor health and education outcomes.

The challenge for minorities such as the Pygmy is to manage the process of their transformation in an increasingly global society. This however, requires a degree of autonomy, empowerment and education which the Pygmies lack. As the poorest group in some of the world's poorest countries (especially in the case of CAR and the DRC), they do not currently have the means or capacity to manage the process of acculturation.

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