

Kwibanda

(Focus)

Idjwi Island – March 2023



The Idjwi Island Pygmies were removed from their ancestral lands and left as squatters in shacks of grass with roofs that leak when it rains.



The Idjwi Island Pygmies' fishing rights have been reassigned to other DRC residents.



Democratic Republic of the Congo



Rwanda

Lofombo Ngolu with an Idjwi Island pygmy.



Lofombo Ngolu wrote PSA from Idjwi Island.

He reported severe hardships among the Idjwi Island Pygmies.

PSA's Field Agent Claude Bizimana called Lofombo Ngolu on WhatsApp.

He said that his community is sick, mostly from starvation. The people are not allowed to fish. There is no longer a place for livestock or gardens. Sanitation in their encampment is bad, and diarrhea is a serious health problem. The young children have tapeworms and suffer from severe malnutrition.



The Idjwi Island Batwa community had homes they had lived in for generations. They were getting education for their children and had food before being displaced from both work and home. They have the skills needed to live in a fishing village. We wonder, can they be moved to another place in the DRC and left to rebuild their lives?

This is a question with a hard answer as much of the DRC is struggling with outbreaks of war over its minerals.

The Congolese Army is accusing Rwanda of supporting the M23 rebels.

It is not a good time for a Rwandan to go to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

PSA is dedicated to empowering Cyaruzinge villagers to lift themselves from poverty. A lot has been accomplished — there is a lot more work to do. PSA often includes the non-Batwa people living around Cyaruzinge village, the Batwa remaining in old Bwiza, and the Batwa of Masoro in the ongoing efforts to improve the lives of historically marginalized people.

While the villagers of Cyaruzinge, Bwiza and Masoro share what they have learned with other Batwa communities, there is not much the Rwandan Batwa or PSA can do in the Congo...yet.

Lofombo Ngolu, a poor man trying to help his starving neighbors came to Cyaruzinge.

He spoke to the Cyaruzinge villagers, he met with Village Leader Jean Marie, and people from HDI, PSA and AIMPO.

AIMPO



Richard Ntakirutimana

Executive Director

**African Initiative
For Mankind
Progress
Organization**



Our friend and colleague, Richard Ntakirutima, knows Congolese citizens who can help the Idjwi Island Pygmies stay in primary school, get medical care, and find ways to regain their fishing rights.

Laws have changed within the last year allowing the Pygmies of the DRC the the same medicine, schooling, and business contractual rights as other DRC citizens.

Richard's contacts are willing as private citizens to guide the Idjwi Island Pygmies through the application process for these benefits. PSA will continue to work with AIMPO to empower the Idjwi Island Pygmies to survive and thrive.