

Displacement and discrimination – the Bambuti Pygmies

For generations the Bamputi Pygmies were nomadic forest-dwellers but in 2004 they too fled the war. Now they live on the outskirts of Goma with little if any support from humanitarian agencies. They have no electricity or running water; straw-covered roofs on makeshift shelters provide poor protection from the frequent rain.

“We can’t plant seeds here,” said Bambuti chief Mupepa Muhindo, scratching the ground, which is littered with lava. “It’s not possible to cultivate the land.”

Life is hard for all IDPs but even worse for the Bambuti, whose lives are blighted by violence and daily discrimination. Discrimination against Pygmies is deeply ingrained at

all levels of Congolese society. They have great difficulty accessing any kind of public or social service, and are routinely turned away. Such attitudes mean parents rarely register new births so total population numbers are unclear but it is estimated that there are about 30,000 in North Kivu and 200-500,000 in DRC as a whole.

Muhindo says he cannot pay school fees or afford school uniforms for his children. “Pygmy children don’t study,” he said. “Because we don’t have any education, we can’t consider ourselves people like others.”

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