

# An Army of Disciple Makers From the Rainforests of Central Africa



## Ndinga

Pastor Ndinga often wakes up very early, because he has a busy schedule. First he goes to check the traps that he expertly sets in several places in the forest, usually a couple of kilometers from his village. Like most Pygmies, from his childhood, he learned how to hunt all kinds of rain forest animals, setting traps on their pathways. Harvesting and resetting traps usually takes him about three hours.

After coming back with the day's prey, he will change clothes, grab his Bible, collect one of his disciples, and they will both spend the next five hours visiting a village church, its leaders and members. He uses these moments to coach and encourage the leaders and the Christ followers who are growing in their faith. Often he will conduct a Discovery Bible Study or two, to help people understand the process.

On their way back home, he may have short visits with other villages for which he and his church have been

praying. He looks forward to finding a Person of Peace, and seeing the launch of Discovery Bible Studies soon. This is Ndinga's life, and what he wants to continue to do until every community in the area has been transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit. He will be back home by 4:00 pm and devote the rest of the day to gathering food in the forest.

This pastor knows where to look for abundant fruit, both sweet food for his family to eat, and the fruit of the Spirit in changing lives and communities in his part of the rain forest.

## How Disciples Become Leaders

Ndinga is a Baka Pygmy from the Central Africa Republic. Two years before, a pastor named Bonane came into his village to distribute clothes and food and to talk to the villagers about the need for their children to have a school to attend. He had a plan to help the village meet a huge need that it had. Ndinga had never imagined that someone would come to his remote village to do something kind like that for their children.



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Ndinga approached Pastor Bonane and started asking questions about why he was doing what he was doing. Bonane's answer was that God loves the Pygmies and wants them to have all these things because He wants what is good for them. So Pastor Bonane was willing to help bring God's blessings to their village. Ndinga knew that this kind of thing just did not happen in Pygmy villages.

He decided to learn more about the God Pastor Bonane was talking about, and he asked many kinds of questions that Bonane patiently answered. One week later, Bonane showed Ndinga and others how to experience a Discovery Bible Study in Ndinga's village. For several weeks, they had meetings during which the villagers heard many stories from the Bible, asked a lot of questions, and shared what they discovered in the Bible with each other.



In a few weeks, eight people in the group became disciples of Jesus. But several refused, saying that the God Pastor Bonane is talking about is a foreign God. Ndinga and seven others were baptized and continued meeting, hearing more stories, discussing and learning more about the God of the Bible.

Ndinga always tried to find time with Pastor Bonane. He had so many questions! He wanted to learn everything very quickly. And he started sharing what he learned with others in the village, and also in other villages.

During one of the meetings in his village, he told Pastor Bonane that the day before he had shared some of the stories in another village and someone wanted to meet with him to ask more questions. Pastor Bonane coached him how to help a group of nine people start gathering to hear more stories and ask more questions. Ndinga started

facilitating the group discussion under the supervision of Pastor Bonane.



The reality is that Ndinga has never stopped helping people grow as disciples of Jesus, and continues coaching them to reach out to other villages.

### The Pygmies of Africa

The term "Pygmy" is used to describe those people groups where the average height of the male adult is less than 150 centimeters (4'11"). The term Pygmy is considered pejorative and so many of them prefer to be identified by their ethnicity such as Twa, Baka etc.



Most Pygmies are like Ndinga, tropical-forest foragers, and the food they find they consume themselves or trade to neighboring farmers in exchange for cultivated foods. They are scattered in more than 14 countries in Africa, but most of the 984,000 Pygmies live in six Central African countries.

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Their neighboring tribes typically consider them inferior. In some places, they have a sort of indentured relationship with their neighbors; you can find the Pygmies serving their masters with manual labor, game, honey and other natural resources from the forest. They are often cheated by not being paid for their labor.

In addition to the above marginalization and mistreatment, many Pygmy communities were exposed to racial extermination during the Rwanda genocide and in the Congo civil war. In these two instances it is estimated more than twenty thousand Pygmies were killed.

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As hunter/gatherers, the forest is very important to their culture and livelihood. Unfortunately, this fundamental element of their identity and sustenance is being destroyed now by farmers and forest exploitation for wood.

According to Musolo W’isuka Kamuha<sup>1</sup>, Pygmies are a challenge to Christian missions because the church (Musola was writing of the church of DRC) has a problem in accepting the Pygmies as fully human beings worthy to be included in the agenda of mission outreach. Thus they have generally remained unreached and unchurched.



According to [peoplegroups.org](http://peoplegroups.org), the Pygmies include 26 unique people groups with a total population of 984,100. They represent 17 UPGs totaling 788,700 people and three UUPGs totaling 22,400 people.

### How it Started

In 2005 Final Command and New Generations teams had a season of prayer that resulted in a list of 18 difficult and large Muslim people groups to engage in Africa. Later in 2007 one of the leaders insisted on including the Pygmies across Africa in this priority list.

As a result of that commitment, in 2008 a five-day DMM training was done in Bangui where Thierry, one of the trainees, decided to engage the Pygmies with his disciple-making team. He recruited two denominations that had also planned to engage this people group and trained their evangelists in the processes. Pastor Bonane was one of those evangelists. What was birthed by Thierry’s resolve and brother Bonane’s passion has been miraculously blessed by God’s favor.

In the last 11 years Thierry’s Pygmy engagements have expanded to six African countries where 2,816 churches have been planted, to the 10<sup>th</sup> generation of churches

<sup>1</sup> [http://uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10500/11863/thesis\\_kamuha\\_mwp.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](http://uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10500/11863/thesis_kamuha_mwp.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)

planting churches, and 145,755 Christ followers through September 2018. That number is still growing rapidly, and now almost 15% of the total African Pygmy population are Christ followers.

## Kanyabikingi and Nana

Kanyabikingi (pseudonym) is a Pygmy who lives in one of the big towns in East Africa. He once described himself as an atheist who embraced the ideology while attending college in a communist country.

He worked for an organization that tries to encourage Pygmy communities to send their children to school. The Pygmy communities in that part of the country, unlike most Pygmies who are hunters and gatherers, make their livelihood by making pottery. Therefore, they prefer their children to help them in making pots instead of sending them to school.

Kanyabikingi's job has been to go to these communities and encourage the parents to send their children to school. He does his job with passion because he wants to see his people improve their livelihood through education.

In 2014, in one of the Pygmy communities he frequently visits, Kanyabikingi met a lady named Nana (pseudonym) who was in her mid-fifties. Nana was a Christ follower who had been encouraged by her ministry to make disciples among the Pygmies. She was well-liked by the community because Nana regularly prayed for the sick and helped the poor. People invited her frequently to their homes because when she prays for them they consistently get solutions for many of their problems.



Kanyabikingi observed what Nana was doing and her love for the Pygmies. He wanted to know more about what she was doing and asked to meet her. So Nana invited Kanyabikingi to attend the Discovery Bible Group that was meeting in her house. Kanyabikingi became a regular member of the DBS group. He had many questions, and Nana coached him how to find the answers in the Bible. Eventually, Kanyabikingi became a follower of Jesus, and then began to use his frequent visits to peoples' houses as an opportunity to share stories from the Bible. Pygmies began to respond to him, and started their own Discovery Bible Groups.

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By the end of 2015, the movement that had started in these two communities had already spread to one more Pygmy community and other people groups, resulting in the planting of an additional 58 churches with nine generations, and more than 600 Christ followers. God used a former atheist, a compassionate woman who prayed for people, and two Pygmy communities to catalyze multi-streamed and multi-ethnic spiritual momentum.

« The very people who have been marginalized in African societies have become agents of the kingdom of God. These people whom some did not accept as truly human have become agents of God's dramatic transformation. MF »

