

School attendance rises and disease falls in the Bagyeli/Bakola communities

Title

Indigenous Bagyeli and Bakola communities in Cameroon are highly marginalised, and most live in poverty. High levels of illiteracy have hindered their efforts to claim their rights to forests and resources (non-timber forest products), and the forests where they live are being lost through logging and the expansion of agriculture. Within the framework of the Ngovayang Forest Project (NFP) in Cameroon, the Cameroon Biodiversity Conservation Society (CBCS, BirdLife in Cameroon) is providing teaching materials at the beginning of each academic year to children of the Bagyeli/Bakola communities, to encourage them to enrol at primary schools. The number of school-going children from these communities, especially girls, is rising every year. They have the support of their parents, thanks to an awareness-raising campaign by the project, which explains how education can change lives and livelihoods. The project is also assisting the communities with improvements in health and hygiene, providing mosquito nets, latrines, and wells for clean water. These have reduced the prevalence of diseases like malaria, cholera typhoid, and dysentery, and the communities now have access to three health centres. *Cameroon Biodiversity Conservation Society (CBCS)*