

Assessing the importance of livestock for the livelihoods of rural people in South Kivu, DR Congo

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Main road from Miti (left) to Bukavu in March 2010; the road was fully asphalted by end of 2010.

Background

Agriculture in the South Kivu province/DR Congo has been characterized by mixed crop-livestock production systems. The population of large livestock species, however, has dramatically decreased since the wars in the mid 1990s due to repeated armed conflicts leading to livestock pillage, population displacement, as well as lack of pasture for grazing.

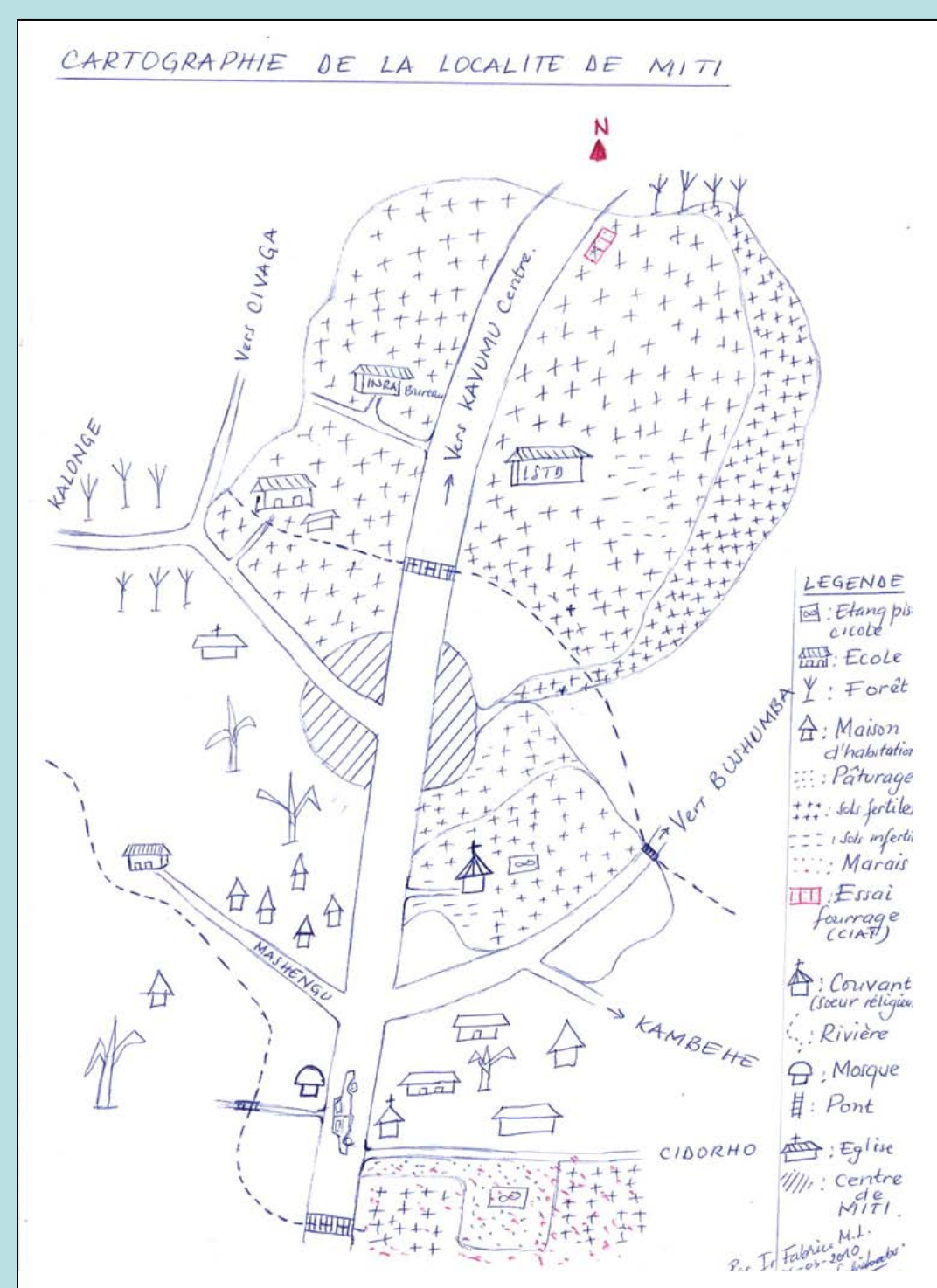
Now small ruminants and non-ruminants (monogastrics) have filled this gap.

| Miti-Mulungu | Characteristic | Tubimbi |
|-----------------------|---|-------------------|
| 25-27 km North | Distance from provincial capital Bukavu | 77 km South-West |
| 1600 m asl. | Elevation | about 1100 m asl. |
| Intermediate (pH 5.2) | Soil fertility | Low (pH 4.4) |



Main road from Tubimbi to Bukavu in March 2010.

Miti-Mulungu



In Miti, 70% of participants and 95% in Tubimbi held any kind of livestock. People are apparently not fully aware about the value of their small animals despite their high abundance (Table).

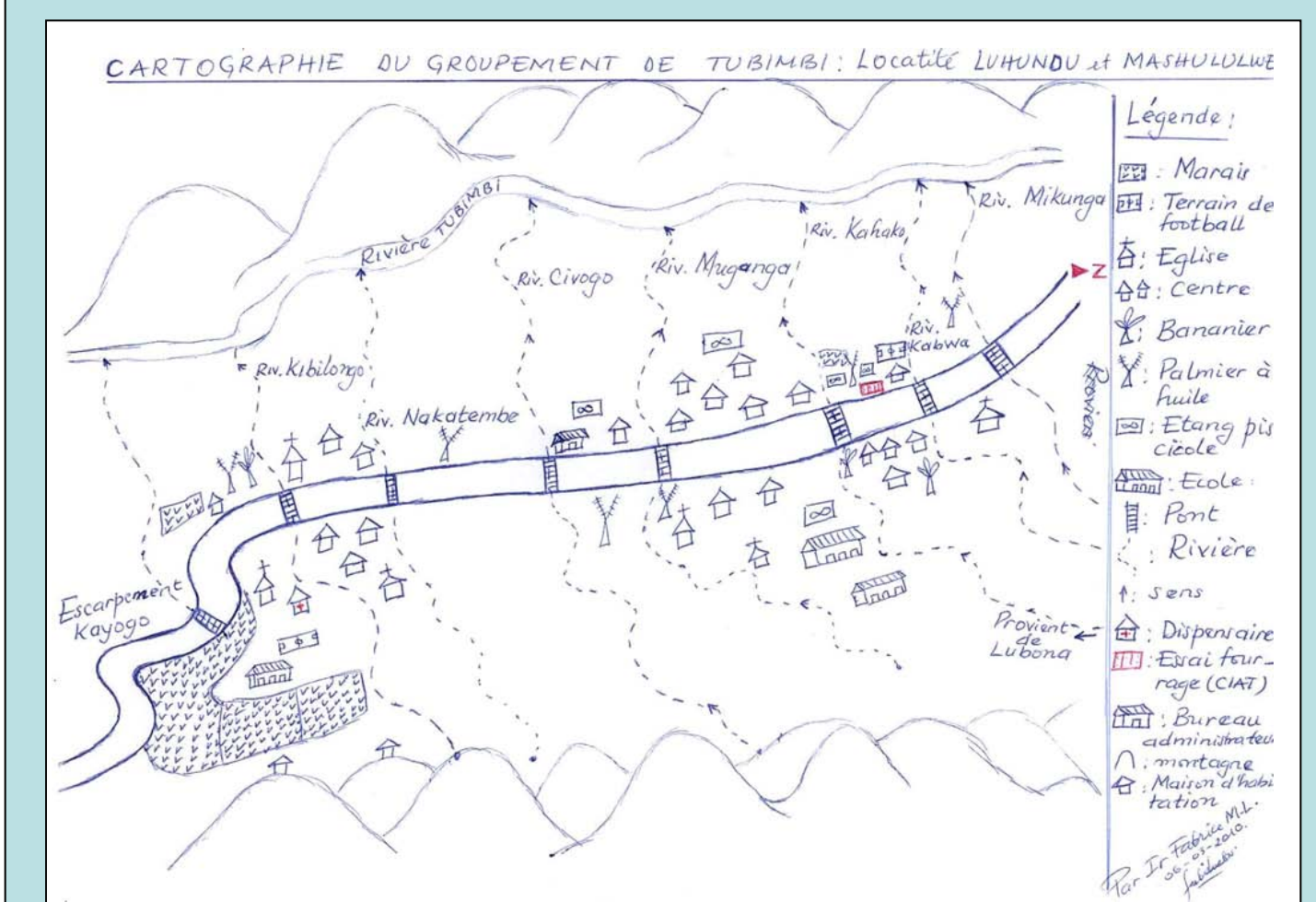
Methods

To assess agricultural activities emphasizing livestock production, a participatory rural appraisal (PRA) was conducted by focus groups in two so-called 'groupements', Miti-Mulungu ('Territoire' de Kabare) and Tubimbi ('Territoire' de Walungu) with overall 165 community members of Miti-Mulungu and Tubimbi in March 2010.

Five tools have been used to gather information, (i) the seasonal calendar; (ii) the gender daily calendar; (iii) the gender wealth classification; (iv) the village resource map; and (v) the resource flow diagram. Full report available online:

<http://www.ciat.cgiar.org/ourprograms/Agrobiodiversity/forages/Pages/Publications.aspx>

Tubimbi



Maps of the groupements Miti (left) and Tubimbi (right) developed together with villagers in focus group discussions in March 2010.

Key results

Livestock sales are used to cover necessary expenses such as medicine or school fees. Resource flows are more intense in Miti and its vicinity than in Tubimbi due to lack of infrastructure and insecurity.

A family consumed meat only once or twice a month, especially covies.

Most problems of livestock husbandry reported were related to diseases and robbery, need for improved forages was less in the minds of villagers.

But the diseases appear to be a consequence of lack of better animal nutrition and access to better life care.

On average, livestock farmers own 3.8 cattle, 8.0 poultry, 2.7 swine, 7.1 covies and/or 3.8 rabbits as livestock assets, raised on about 0.06 ha of pasture land.

| Abundance (%) | Cattle | Goats | Chicken | Swine | Covies | Rabbits | Ducks | Acqua- culture (ponds) |
|---------------------|--------|-------|---------|-------|--------|---------|-------|------------------------|
| Location | | | | | | | | |
| Miti-Mulungu (N=70) | 1.4 | 42.9 | 27.1 | 4.3 | 22.9 | 18.6 | n.a. | 1.4 |
| Tubimbi (N=80) | 11.3 | 46.3 | 81.3 | 51.3 | 53.8 | 8.8 | 16.3 | 28.8 |

Conclusions

- Especially possessing large animals like cattle is an important wealth criterion.
- Small animals are frequently exchanged with bigger ones, such as goats, swine and even cows, indicating the potential to help their owner ascend on the so-called 'livestock ladder'; they are most important for family nutrition.
- Both crop and livestock production are insufficient even for subsistence due to diseases and low soil fertility; young men have gone away to mine gold.
- Lack of access to appropriate veterinary products and other livestock services are among the major livestock challenges faced.

Acknowledgement

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Miti. The group of men gathering information during the first day of the PRA (top) and discussing the findings from the first day (bottom).



Tubimbi. The women's group who gathered information during the first day of the PRA (top) and discussing the findings from the first day among all participants (bottom).

