



RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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The Board		14 April 2004
About the Board	RDC42555.FE	
Biographies		
Organization Chart	Democratic Republic of Congo: Forced marriages, particularly among the Bambala ethnic group; whether members of the same family can marry one another; if so, the possible consequences and recourse available to a woman who refuses such a marriage, and the protection offered to her by the state (April 2004)	
Employment	Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa	
Legal and Policy		
References		
Publications		
Tribunal	The Bambala are native to the Province of Bandundu (PAAF 14 Apr. 2004; University of Kinshasa Aug. 2000; REC 18 Mar. 1999).	
Refugee Protection Division		
Immigration Division	During a 14 April 2004 telephone interview, the president of the Programs for the Call to Women's Action (Programme d'appui aux actions féminines, PAAF), who is also a lecturer at the University of Kinshasa, provided the following information.	
Immigration Appeal Division		
Decisions	Among the Bambala, as among other ethnic groups of Bandundu, marriages often take place between members of the same family. Marriages between cousins and between nieces and nephews are common.	
Forms		
Statistics		
Research	The PAAF president, who is a native of this province, said that customary marriages, like civil marriages, are recognized by Congolese law. Consequently, the Democratic Republic of Congo (RDC) does not interfere with the customs of the various ethnic groups, unless there is a complaint. According to the president, [translation] "it is unthinkable for a young girl to oppose the wishes of her family, and even less likely that she would file a complaint against them." She explained that, to escape such unions, some educated women prefer not to return to their community after finishing their studies, and opt to live in large cities or abroad.	
Research Program		
National Documentation Packages		
Issue Papers and Country Fact Sheets		
Responses to Information Requests	During a 8 April 2004 telephone interview, a researcher and legal advisor at <i>Éveil de la femme</i> , a women's rights organization based in Kinshasa, said that forced marriages are common throughout the RDC, and particularly in Bandundu and Kasai. Women are often forced to marry the uncle, brother or cousin of a dead husband, or even their own cousin, nephew, or uncle, though the latter is less common (<i>Éveil de la femme</i> 8 Apr. 2004).	
Recent Research		
Media Centre		
News		
Information Sheets	Though it does not refer specifically to the Bambala, a paper titled <i>Congo, l'itinéraire noir</i> indicated that, among some ethnic groups in RDC,	
Media Relations		
	[translation]	
Proactive Disclosure	marriage is the society's fundamental institution. Preferential marriages and lineage exogamy between clans are practised, and the notion of incest is a social concept,	

not a genetic one. Rules are very precise because marriage is an exchange of women between groups, an alliance, a means of social cohesion, and often a political tool. Being single is inconceivable. This system serves two purposes: if men marry women of their own lineage, ties with other lineages will cease to exist; and the exchange of women between two or more groups compensates for any natural abnormalities (Valenciennes Museum of Fine Arts Sept. 2001).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

Éveil de la femme [Kinshasa]. 8 April 2004. Telephone interview with a researcher and legal advisor.

Programme d'appui aux actions féminines (PAAF) [Kinshasa]. 14 April 2004. Telephone interview with the president.

Réseau européen Congo (REC). 18 March 1999. No. 2/99. "Bandundu." <<http://129.194.252.80/catfiles/1545.pdf>> [Accessed 13 Apr. 2004]

University of Kinshasa, School of Public Health. August 2000. Okitolonda W. et al. *La malnutrition dans la zone de santé de Ngaba*. <http://www.espkin.org/Docs_Files/Resources/MalnutNGABA.pdf> [Accessed 13 Apr. 2004]

Valenciennes Museum of Fine Arts. September 2001. Moreau, Delpouve F. *Congo, l'itinéraire noir. Dossier enseignant : exposition 4 octobre 2001 au 27 janvier 2002*. <<http://www.valenciennes.fr/musee/jeunes/visitesjeunes/Dossier%20pédagogiques/congo.doc>> [Accessed 14 Apr. 2004]

Additional Sources Consulted

Publications : *Africa Confidential*; Resource Centre country file.

Internet sites, including: AllAfrica, Amnesty International, European Country of Origin Information Network, Human Rights Watch (HRW), MISNA, ReliefWeb, WomenWatch.

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