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Pottery and Politics: Understanding the Economic and Political Integration of Rwanda's Batwa in Post Genocide Rwanda

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**Pottery and Politics: Understanding the Economic and Political Integration of Rwanda's Batwa
in Post Genocide Rwanda**

Michelle Lee

Spring 2017

World Learning – SIT Study Abroad

Rwanda: Post Genocide Restoration and Peacebuilding Program

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Abbreviations

COPORWA- Rwandese Community of Potters

HMP- Historically Marginalized People

VUP- Vision 2020 Umurenge Program

Abstract

This paper seeks to understand how the Batwa, Rwanda's marginalized people, have been integrated into Rwanda's current economic and political situation. It engages in the questions of whether or not the Batwa are economically distinct, how they have benefitted from government poverty alleviation programs, such as VUP, Girinka, Mituelles de Santé and Ubudehe. It also examines how the Batwa are politically represented and their inclusion in Ndi Umunyarwanda.

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Chapter 1: General Introduction and Background of the Study

1.1 Background of the Study

As the first residents of modern-day Rwanda, the Twa primarily lived in the forests, enjoying a hunter-gatherer lifestyle. In 700 BC, when the Bantu migration reached Rwanda, Twa hunting grounds were cleared to make space for Bantu agriculture, thus catalyzing the slow, but continual, deprivation of Twa land. This process intensified with the advent of pastoralism, further relegating the Twa into the forest. During the pre-colonial period the Twa were incorporated into the Mwami's kingdom, often serving as dancers and music makers in his court.¹ Still, during the pre-colonial period, the Twa remained at the bottom of the social hierarchy, as explain by local lore that the king had three sons, each of whom was given a bowl of milk to keep safe. As legend goes, the Batwa drank the milk, the Bahutu fell asleep and split the milk and the Batutsi kept his², justifying social order in pre-colonial Rwanda.

Under Belgian colonial rule, discrimination against the Twa continued. In the 1930s the forests were nationalized, prohibiting Twa ownership of their ancestral land. In the 1970s and 80s, the Habyarimana regime evicted the Twa from many forests, offering little compensation for the lost land. Furthermore, in the early 1990s the Twa were evicted from the Gishwati Forest Preserve for an unsuccessful World Bank project to protect the forest.

¹ Briggs, Philip and Booth, Jane. *Rwanda*. Bradt: 2009. Print.

² Ashdown, Nick. "The Batwa: Rwanda's Invisible People". 4 June 2013. *Intercontinentalcry.org*. Web. 2 March 2016.

In addition, in 1998, much of the remaining forest was destroyed in order to resettle returning refugees from the Civil War and Genocide.³

With the loss of land has come the loss of the traditional livelihood: hunting and gathering. Twas have been forced to find other sources of income, including pottery, farming others' land, and carrying loads. Because of this, potters make as little as \$10 per month.⁴ Thus, the Twa community lives in poverty in impermanent kin group encampments. In 2006, only 28% of Twa children attended primary school, compared to 88% of other Rwandans. Furthermore, 47% of Twa have no land⁵, making it difficult to survive in a subsistence agriculture economy. Worse, only 1.6% of Twa in 2006 had enough land to feed their families. 77% were illiterate, while 30% were unemployed.⁶ These statistics contrast greatly with the living standards of the average Rwandan. Further, the Twa community suffered greatly during the Genocide, losing 10% of its population.⁷ Thus, due to a lack of land, Twas live disproportionately in poverty, when compared to the average Rwandan.

Law No 47/2001 of December 2001 instituting punishment for offences of discrimination and sectarianism punishes Rwandans for divisionism, effectively removing the labels of Tutsi, Hutu and Twa from the public sphere because of the history of the Rwandan genocide.⁸ With this erasure Twa have become known as “potters” or “historically

³ Briggs, ibd.

⁴ “The Batwa: Rwanda’s Invisible People”

⁵ *Rwanda*

⁶ *Rwanda*

⁷ “The Batwa: Rwanda’s Invisible People”

⁸ “Report of the African Commission’s Working Group on Indigenous Populations/Communities: Mission to the Republic of Rwanda” 1-5 December 2008. *ACHPR and IWGIA: 2010*

marginalized people.” Despite this re-naming, the government under Kagame has instituted new policies in an attempt to ameliorate the poverty of the Batwa. The Twa, falling into Category I, qualify for the Vision Umurenge Programme (VUP), which provides services to the most vulnerable members of Rwandan society. VUP, a poverty alleviation program targeted at all Rwandans, aims to “release the productive capacities” of Rwandans. This is done through a three-prong method: public works, credit packages and direct supports. Through this the government hopes to incentivize Rwandans to work, whether it be in agriculture or in business.⁹ Another government-funded poverty alleviation program is Girinka, the one cow policy. Under Girinka poor families are given a cow in hopes that it will combat child malnutrition and provide fertilizer for farming, as well as create a sense of community through passing along calves.¹⁰ The government has also implemented Ubudehe, the meetings through which umudugudus decide what development works needs to be done and which families are in Category 1.¹¹ Mituelles de Santé also address poverty. This is government funded healthcare that makes health insurance accessible to the poorest Rwandans.¹² Further, the government has worked to create permanent villages for the Twa. In 2011, working with the Health Development Initiative, the government built the Cyaruzinge village, outside of Kigali. The government also gave the village fifteen cows. In addition, under the National Social Protection Strategy, primary and secondary school fees

⁹ “Vision 2020 Umurenge: An Integrated Local Development Program to Accelerate Poverty Eradication, Rural Growth and Social Protection.” August 2007. <http://www.rw.undp.org/content/dam/rwanda/docs/povred/VUP-VISION-2020-UMURENGE-DOCUMENT.pdf>

¹⁰ “Girinka” *Rwandapedia*. Web. 15 May 2017.

¹¹ “Ubudehe” *Rwandapeida*. Web. 15 May 2017.

¹² “Rwanda Community Based Health Insurance Policy” *Ministry of Health*. April 2010.

are waived and the university education of Twa students is fully funded. However, since only half of Twa finish Secondary School, very few Twas are able to take advantage of this program. Additionally, the Twa lack political representation in Rwanda with only one Twa representative in parliament, Juvenal Sebishwi.¹³ Thus, in modern Rwanda, although policies exist to help improve the living conditions of the Twa, these policies have failed to raise the Twa out of their impoverished and historically marginalized position.

Statement of the Problem

The problem I seek to address is to what degree the Rwandan government has been successful in politically, economically and socially integrating the Twa into post-genocide Rwandan society. It needs to be examined what and where the Rwandan government has been successful in its attempts to alleviate the poverty of the Twa and what areas need to be improved. Do the Twa continue to live in insular enclaves? Do they have access to economically survivable livelihoods?

Objective of the Study

1. Understand to what extent the Twa have benefitted in the same way as other Rwandans from the post-genocide development and if any disparities exist.
2. Determine whether the promotion of the Umunyarwanda identity has positively or negatively influenced the Twa community.

¹³ "The Batwa: Rwanda's Invisible People"

Chapter 2: Research Methodology

Scope of the Study

This study addresses the issue of Twa economic and political integration through the political science domain, meaning that policy and its implications on the constituency will be examined. The study only includes members of the Batwa community or those working closely with them. This is in an attempt to understand how the Batwa perceive their economic and political situation, rather than what the government thinks. The sample of interviewees all either live or work in Kigali. This is due to logistical constraints. The field observation is limited to Nyaruguru district because that is the only district that COPORWA is currently completing field work in. The study only intends to address the post-genocide situation of the Batwa and limits itself to the community in Rwanda, rather than the Great Lakes region.

Methodology

In order to conduct my research, I relied on a mixture of primary and secondary source analysis, interviews and participant observation.

The primary sources I consulted included government document outlining various poverty alleviation techniques, such as VUP, Girinka and Ubudehe. I looked into these programs targeting Category One Rwandans in order to understand how the Rwandan government addresses the poverty of the Batwa. Further, I also consulted secondary sources written about the specific situation of the Batwa in Rwanda, including the *Report of the African Commission's Working Group on Indigenous Populations/Communities: Mission to the Republic of Rwanda*. This mission allowed me to understand the legal perspective on the situation of the Rwandan Batwa and what the government thinks about the Batwa. I also had the opportunity to use a

report by COPORWA, a Rwandan NGO addressing the Batwa, called “The Socio-economic Situation of the Historically Marginalized People in Rwanda”. This report gave me access to quantitative data on the situation of the Batwa.

My primary method of data collection was interviews. I conducted six interviews with 3 men and 3 women. I began this process by contacting Kalimba Zephrin. From there I interviewed leaders at the Kigali Pottery Cooperative and COPORWA, utilizing a snowball technique. My interview questions, outlined in Appendix A, focused on the political integration of the Rwanda Batwa. I also used a snowball technique to find more respondents.

I then was able to participate in participant observation. I went with an employee of COPORWA to the Nyaruguru district field office. I spent three days there May 1-3, witnessing COPORWA’s operations within Nyaruguru. With the field worker I was able to visit four Batwa umudugudus and witness their lifestyle. I also had the opportunity to speak to some residents. I also witnessed COPORWA’s work in the field sensitizing people about COPORWA and governmental programs.

Ethical Values Observed during the Study

While doing my research I was careful to observe all the qualities of an ethical research project, particularly since the subject of my research is the Batwa. The Batwa, as a historically marginalized group, are particularly vulnerable because they have been stereotyped and prevented from accessing educational and employment opportunities. Because of this, many Batwa live in extreme poverty, making them susceptible to exploitation and abuse. Considering this, I, as a researcher, had to take extra care not to further contribute to this marginalization and lack of agency.

In order to be conscious of the ethics of my research I must be cognizant of my position as a researcher. I am a white American doing research in Rwanda. There is an unequal distribution of power between me and the people I am researching. Knowing this allows me to prioritize my subjects' agency because I am aware that Rwandans often try to please Westerners, and, therefore, may answer things they are uncomfortable with because I am white. Furthermore, in order to perform research, I must be aware of how I am perceived. Many Rwandans perceive white people as being rich. Because people may think I have money or ties to funding that might influence their willingness to answer my questions. Thus, by understanding unequal power dynamics caused by colonization and neo-imperialism I am better equipped to combat these disparities of power and wealth.

The first characteristic of an ethical study is respect for persons. This means that the researcher must respect the agency of the people being interviewed.¹⁴ To accomplish this I began each interview by describing my research questions and asking for consent to record the interview. From there, I made it clear that he or she could choose to be anonymous, decline questions or stop the interview at any time. Through this I expressed that they had control of what information they wanted to divulge, effectively respecting their agency as an informant.

The second characteristic of ethical research is beneficence—doing no harm and maximizing the possible benefit to the research subjects.¹⁵ In order to ensure that I did not psychologically, physically, legally, socially or economically damage the informants, I provided confidentiality and the option of anonymity during my interviews. I believe that for many

¹⁴ "Ethics of Research in Conflict and Post-Conflict Environments"

¹⁵ *ibid.*

Batwa, advocacy is an important element of changing their economic and political situation. Thus, the risks are considered reasonable in hopes of shedding lights on the extreme poverty that their community faces.

The third characteristic of ethical research is justice—the equal distribution of benefits and burdens of research between the researcher and the informants.¹⁶ I only individually interviewed prominent members of the Batwa community. I chose not to interview average members of the community because I felt that the questions about the economic situation would put more strain on them because of their individual situation. Whereas, leaders in the community spend more time advocating about these issues, and are, therefore, more comfortable speaking about them. I also relieved the burden by travelling to each informant where they were, facilitating their comfort. Informants were also able to choose between French or English in an effort to reduce their burden.

Thus, through carefully considering the situation of the Batwa and modifying my research accordingly, I believe I did my best to conduct an ethical study.

Limitations of the Study

Because of the limited nature of the Independent Study Project period, this study was constrained.

The ISP period only lasted for four weeks, meaning that I was only able to interview 6 people and go on one field visit. This means that my study is a low-n study. Thus, all the data collected is anecdotal and really only reflects the beliefs of the people that I interviewed.

¹⁶ Ibid.

Another limitation of my study is my pool of interviewees. The majority of people I interviewed were 35 or older. This means that I was only interviewing people from the older generation and I did not interview anyone born after the genocide. This skews my sample because it is possible that the younger generation of Batwa holds different views on the subject. It is also important to note that my sample all experienced life as a Batwa before the genocide under the Habarimana regime, providing a comparison that may positively influence their perceptions of the current RPF government.

Further, during this study I only spoke with members of the Batwa community living in Kigali or Nyaruguru. This limits the study because location influences a person's perceptions. For example, the Batwa in Kigali may have easier access to government programming because of their proximity to the urban space; whereas, the Batwa in Nyaruguru still live close to the Nyungwe forest. These geographical factors will influence viewpoints.

Another limiting element of my study is that I only interviewed relatively affluent Batwa. All of the people I interviewed had a salaried job, whether it be in parliament, a pottery cooperative or an NGO. This is very rare for the majority of Batwa. Further, many of them had gone to university, another unique factor. Thus, my sample is skewed because those that I spoke to had easier access to career and livelihoods than the ordinary Batwa.

Literature Review

Historical Marginalization

One prevalent theme in the literature that I read was that the Twa have been historically excluded from full participation in Rwandan society. In the article “Molders of Mud: Ethnogenesis and Rwanda’s Twa” Christopher C. Taylor discusses how Rwanda’s Twa as a distinct group formed. Taylor suggests that “if ethnic stereotyping is to be overcome in Rwanda, the lowly status of the Twa has to be amended.” The Twa were the first group in Rwanda to suffer from social exclusion, thus they were the first group to experience racism in Rwanda. Before colonialism there was a tradition of “kunena abatwa” (stigmatizing Twa)- the avoidance of the Twa in marriage and in residence. Additionally, the Twa were denied resources, such as land and cattle. They were associated negatively with nature. Because the Twa were so intimately tied to nature, through their lifestyle as hunter-gatherers, they were perceived as animalistic, savage, gluttonous and unclean.¹⁷

Reconciliation and Ndi Umunyarwanda

Many academics who study the Twa focus on issues of how the Twa fit into to Rwanda’s post-genocide framework of national unity and reconciliation. Under the Rwandan constitution groups cannot organize themselves along ethnic lines, in an attempt to prevent the divisionism

¹⁷ Taylor, Christopher. “Molders of Mud: Ethnogenesis and Rwanda’s Twa.” *Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology*, 76:02. (pp. 183-208) Web. 13 April 2017.

that catalyzed the 1994 Rwandan genocide. In the article “Ethnic Twa and Rwandan National Unity and Reconciliation Policy”, Susan M. Thomson discusses how the erasure of ethnicity from the public sphere negatively impacts the Twa’s ability to participate in reconciliation activities. Because the official narrative of the genocide focuses on Tutsis as victims and Hutu as perpetrators/bystanders, the Twa get left out of the calculations, even though 30% of the Rwandan Twa were killed during the genocide and other Twa participated as killers. Thus, Thomson notes how the Twa have had difficulty in Gacaca as well as in Ingando camps.¹⁸

In addition, many scholars who focus on indigenous groups’ rights criticize the Rwandan government for failing to recognize the Twa as a unique ethnic group that was the first group to settle in Rwanda. Thomson discusses this, saying that in 2008 the Rwandan government failed to recognize the Twa as an indigenous group, violating its obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.¹⁹ Rather, the government chooses to label the Twa as a “historically marginalized group”. This is discussed at length in Brett Hartley’s article “Rwanda’s Post-Genocide Approach to Ethnicity and Its Impact on the Batwa as an Indigenous People: An International Human Rights Law Approach”. The article quotes the “8th Periodical Report of Rwanda to the African Commission on Human and People’s Rights”, with the Rwandan government saying it “refrains from recognizing in this or that category of Rwandese, communities willing to identify themselves as under ethnic form or under any grouping presenting itself as having some inborn rights that other Rwandese cannot have.” Thus, the

¹⁸ Thomson, Susan. “Ethnic Twa and Rwandan National Unity and Reconciliation Policy”. *Peace Review: A Journal of Social Justice*, 21:313-320. Web. 13 April 2017.

¹⁹ Ibid.

government fails to address any needs that may be unique to the Batwa. This harms the Twa communities because they do not get any of the benefits afforded to them under International Law because they are indigenous to the Great Lakes Region. The article goes on to express how, within the AU, there have been commitments to protecting the rights of indigenous individuals. The ACHPR has adopted indigenous rights as part of its mandate. In 2010, the decision “Centre for Minority Rights Development (Kenya) and Minority Rights Group International on Behalf of Endorois Welfare Council v. Kenya” ruled that, in Kenya, the rights of the indigenous Endorois were recognized over their traditional land, even though they had been previously evicted. This decision shows that norms in East Africa are beginning to shift regarding the protection of indigenous groups. However, in Rwanda since the Batwa are not seen as indigenous, only as a historically marginalized group, they do not receive specialized poverty alleviation services. The government claims that the Batwa benefit from free universal education in Rwanda because they eliminated school fees and provided aid for Batwa who continue on to university. However, in reality Batwa still face barriers to receiving education. Many Batwa cannot afford uniforms or school supplies. Additionally, within the classroom Batwa face discrimination and ostracization from their classmates. Because the Batwa do not benefit from universal education in the same way as most Rwanda, they do not have the educational background necessary for many jobs that would increase their standard of living and social capital. Furthermore, the Batwa have been given some land as part of a poverty alleviation program. Yet, this is an attempt to assimilate the Batwa into Rwandan agriculture and pastoralism. In addition, the Rwandan government has built houses for the Batwa. This disregards that the Batwa have

traditionally been more mobile.²⁰

Furthermore, because the Twa cannot be recognized as a unique ethnic group in Rwanda, it becomes difficult for many NGOs to address the unique needs of the Twa. Groups that attempt to work with the Twa population can be labelled as divisionist by the Rwandan government and risk being shut down. Thomson notes how many foreign donors are hesitant to sponsor programs that cater to the Twa because some workshops have been cancelled.²¹

Additionally, the Twa have been excluded for the most part from Rwanda's political sphere. This is partially due to the difficulties Twa have accessing education. However, the article "Political Representation of Minorities as Collateral Damage or Gain: The Batwa in Burundi and Rwanda" by Stef Vandeginste offers an alternative perspective of why the Batwa are excluded from participating politically in Rwanda through creating a comparison with the political inclusion of the Batwa in Burundi. In Burundi, the Batwa are guaranteed 3 members of the legislative branch. Vandeginste suggests that the differences in how peace was achieved in Burundi and Rwanda accounts for this. In Burundi, peace was achieved through negotiations and a power-sharing agreement based on ethnicity, explaining why a quota exists for the Batwa. However, in Rwanda peace was achieved with the RPF invaded Rwanda and took Kigali. The RPF has since maintained political power. Vandeginste suggests that this is why the Twa

²⁰ Hartley, Brett. "Rwanda's Post-Genocide Approach to Ethnicity and Its Impact on the Batwa as an Indigenous People: An International Human Rights Law Perspective." *QUT Law Review*: 15:1. Web. 13 April 2015.

²¹ Ibid.

lack political participation. He claims that there is an indirect risk in recognizing the distinctness of the Twa because it would mean Rwanda would have to embrace its ethnic diversity. This could, in turn, lead to the mass mobilization of disgruntled Hutu farmers who have grievances with the RPF and the inequities of development in Rwanda. The long-term implication could be demands for power-sharing in Rwanda, which is something Vandeginste claims the RPF does not want, thus explaining why the Rwandan government fails to recognize the Twa.²²

Stereotyping

Currently in Rwanda the Twa continue to suffer from negative stereotypes. Some Twa that continue to participate in forest-related activities are referred to as “mpunyu”. Further, in some cases there are separate utensils for Twa. They continue to be viewed as primitive and unclean, as separate from the rest of the Rwandans. Even pottery, the current livelihood of many Twa, is seen as a profession that is dirty and close to the earth.²³

²² Vandeginste, Stef. “Political Representation of Minorities as Collateral Damage or Gain: The Batwa in Burundi and Rwanda.” *African Spectrum: 2014*, 49(1):3-25. Web.

²³ Ibid.

Findings

Landlessness and Pottery

One recurring theme I encountered in my interviews and fieldwork was an emphasis on the distinct lifestyle of Rwanda's Batwa. The Batwa, for the most part, do not participate in sustenance agriculture like the majority of Rwandans. Each individual I interacted with emphasized that 95% of the Batwa do not own land after their traditional forest lands were seized without any form of compensation.²⁴ Because of this, many Batwa live in houses on government-owned land. Since they do not own land, they are unable to participate in traditional Rwandan livelihoods, such as agriculture or pastoralism—thus differentiating the Batwa community from the majority of Rwandans.

Instead, their primary source of livelihood and economic survival is pottery. Pottery is of the utmost importance to the community because it is a shared socialization. Further, because the Batwa are the main group who do pottery it has become an important element of their communal identity since they no longer have an identity as forest dwellers. Interviewee A, discussing agriculture said, "it is not our culture. Our culture is making pots."²⁵ Angélique, the director of the Kacyiru Pottery Cooperative, suggest that that label potter is synonymous with Twa.²⁶ However, despite the cultural significance of pottery, it fails to adequately provide a livelihood for many Batwa, particular in the era of plastic pots. Commenting on this, Kalimba

²⁴ Zephrin, Kalimba. Personal interview. 18 April 2017.

²⁵ Interviewee A. Personal interview. 26 April 2017.

²⁶ Mukantembe, Angélique and Munyarukundo, Shaban. Personal interview. 21 April 2017.

Zephrin referred to pottery as “le métier du base.”²⁷ [low work] Pottery requires manual labor with the Earth and is very strenuous for little reward. One pot in the rural areas of Nyaruguru is sold for as little as 200 RWF. Thus, although pottery is culturally significant and distinguishes the Batwa from other Rwandans, it fails to provide economic survivability for many Batwa.

Further, when compounded with the landlessness of the Batwa pottery can become infeasible. Many Batwa communities do not have legal access to the marshlands where clay is found. Much of this land has been appropriated for agriculture, such as rice. Because of this, many Batwa communities cannot rely on pottery to support themselves. In the first *ubudugudu* I visited on my field visit, no adults were present in the morning because they were out search for food. According to a 2013 study, “The Socio-Economic Situation of the Historically Marginalized People in Rwanda”, conducted by COPORWA, 60% of Batwa rely on begging, while 93% participate in *guca inshora*—working for others. By farming for their neighbors for 300-500 RWF per day or begging,²⁸ the Batwa remain othered because they cannot adequately support themselves and must publicly search for some sort of living. Further, because it contributes to the exploitation of the community, inhibiting full integration.

It is under these conditions of landlessness and low economic conditions that the Batwa exist as a group distinct from other Rwandans. Because the majority Batwa engage in pottery, it can be inferred that they have not been completely integrated into Rwandan society because they do

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ “The Socio-Economic Situation of the Historically Marginalized People in Rwanda” Community of Rwandese Potters. Aug 2014. Web.

not share similar economic backgrounds or have ventured into non-pottery or begging livelihoods.

Government Poverty Alleviation Programs: Increased Access to General Programming

Since 2006, the Batwa have benefitted from a variety of government poverty alleviation programs, due to their categorization as Category 1, the poorest Rwandans. These programs range from girinka to ubudehe, addressing the poverty of all impoverished Rwandans. The mere fact that the Batwa are eligible for government programs differentiates the current situation from the Habyarimana regime, during which the Batwa received no government attention.²⁹ However, urban Batwa tend to view the government programs as successful; whereas rural Batwa perceive these programs as grossly ineffective.

Kalimba Zephrin, the one Senator representing the Batwa, residing in Kigali, cited a variety of programs that the Batwa benefit from. He believes that the Batwa benefit in the same way as all Rwandans, saying “Les Batwa sont profité comme les autres des programmes comme Girinka, les programmes de l’amélioration de la pauvreté...il n’y a pas de problème d’accéder les programmes du gouvernement” [The Batwa have benefitted like the others from programs like Girinka, the programs of poverty amelioration...there’s no problem accessing government programs]³⁰ He went on to mention girinka, houses built during umuganda, the replacement of

²⁹ Interview with Interviewee A

³⁰ Ibid.

grass thatched roofs with iron roofing, and professional training programs. Another interviewee, Dieudonné, echoed this sentiment, adding that, through VUP, the Batwa in Kigali get paid to participate in public service projects.³¹ Angélique discussed how they, the Batwa, were the first to benefit from Girinka and noted how the government has “helped a lot.”³² Thus, in urban areas, the Batwa seem to feel as though the government has aided them, helping to improve their lot.

This is in stark contrast to the rural perspective. Two interviewees critiqued government programs, such as Girinka, as being inaccessible or infeasible for the Batwa community. Since raising cows requires land, it is very difficult for many Batwa to support a cow, because traditionally they lack land. Even Kalimba Zephrin commented on this, saying “Les programmes comme Girinka aident les Twa s’ils ont access à la terre.” [Programs like Girinka help the Twa if they have access to land.]³³ The word “if” suggests that for landless Twa, the majority, Girinka does not offer effective poverty alleviation because they cannot access it without land for the cow to graze. Further, the extreme poverty of the Batwa makes Girinka implausible.

Interviewee A elaborated on this, saying “If people are very poor and they are not finding something to eat, will they find things to eat for the cow? No.”³⁴ Although this might seem counterintuitive, food insecurity can influence one’s abilities to take care of other needs.

Additionally, because the Batwa culture is traditionally centered around pottery, there is no

³¹ Mubirige, Dieudonne. Personal Interview. 27 April 2017.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

understanding of how to take care of cows and they are often mistreated.³⁵ In addition to the feasibility of Girinka for the Batwa community, there are doubts about whether Girinka is reaching rural Batwa. Of the four villages I visited in Nyaruguru, only one had received cows. Further, the 2014 COPORWA study³⁶ suggested that only 10% of the Batwa had received cows. Although this can be partially explained because the program is ongoing and many Batwa do not have land to maintain cows, it also shows that the program may not be the most effective. Thus, Girinka does not effectively address the issue of Batwa poverty.

The rural perspective also cast doubt onto the efficacy of other VUP programs. One successful anecdote involved ubudehe. An elderly man in the third village had no family or means to support himself, so through ubudehe he was able to receive direct support from the government and received a cow. However, in my field visits I also saw examples of the shortcomings of some poverty alleviation programs. In the first ubudugudu I witnessed a shortcoming of the Mituelles de Santé. The COPORWA representative spoke to a man with a bloated stomach. He had been beaten three months prior, but had never used his Mituelle de Santé because he could not afford the 2000 RWF co-pay. Further, many Batwa cannot access VUP Credit Packages because they do not have a mortgage to finance their loans. Thus, they cannot fully benefit from that program because they are ineligible. Additionally, in rural areas Vision 2020 is not viewed positively. In the third ubudugudu I visited when asked about Vision

³⁵ Interviewee B. Personal Interview. 2 May 2017.

³⁶ ³⁶ “The Socio-Economic Situation of the Historically Marginalized People in Rwanda” Community of Rwandese Potters. Aug 2014. Web.

2020 a man scoffed and said “Look at my children.” This response demonstrates that these programs are not taken seriously in rural areas because they see no proof of development impacting their lives. These programs, although potentially successful overall in Rwanda, fail to address the needs of rural Batwa.

Thus, although having access to government programs is an improvement for the Batwa community, it becomes clear that not all Batwa can easily benefit from these programs, helping to explain why many Batwa continue to live in extreme poverty.

Access to Education

The Rwandan government has instituted a universal primary education policy, in an attempt to allow all Rwandan children to have access to education. In order to include the Rwandan Batwa in this, MIAROC, covers the primary, secondary and university fees of Batwa students because before the 1994 genocide, the Batwa were mostly prohibited from going to school, again demonstrating how the RPF has improved the general situation of the Batwa. However, like other government policies, there are discrepancies between the government’s pledged commitment to 100% primary education by 2020 and the situation on the ground.

In my conversation with Angélique and Shaban, they spoke highly of the education their children were receiving. Angélique emphasized that “our kids go to school like anybody else.” They spoke of how before the Twa received no formal education and how now their children

have the the opportunity to better the lives of the community.³⁷ This demonstrates that, within Kigali, the Batwa have the opportunity to easily access school and continue onto secondary school or university.

However, in more rural communities, access to education is much more limited. Many children in these communities drop out of school and do not finish primary school, contrary to the government's goal of universal education. As Interviewee A stated, "Our law is everybody accesses education The children of our community are hindered by extreme poverty."³⁸ Thus, the law on paper and the reality diverge because many Twa live in desolate poverty. Because of this extreme poverty and low income of households, many families cannot afford uniforms or other school supplies necessary to attend school in Rwanda. Further, some children drop out because they are too hungry to study or need to work to help support their families. In the first ubudugudu I visited, I witnessed a mother with an approximately 7-year-old daughter and two twin babies. The 7-year-old had had to drop out of school in order to help her mother take care of the babies. This demonstrates how because the Batwa remain in poverty, even though the government has somewhat eased their ability to attend school, they still cannot fully access this program because of a lack of means. This, in turn, contributes to the community's poverty because, as interviewee A said, "Education is the key of life. If you are well-educated, you can get a job and a good life, but the Batwa have not had it."³⁹ Without adequate education, their economic situation remains precarious.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

Failure to Address Unique Needs

Despite the inclusion of the Batwa in government programming, the Batwa remain impoverished. This suggests that the poverty alleviation programs are somehow inadequate. Each respondent suggested that this is because the government has not worked to specifically address the needs of the Batwa. Because they are historically marginalized, the Batwa remain behind other Rwandans because until approximately 2006, they had little to no educational opportunities or access to any poverty alleviation strategies. Interviewee A articulated this, saying “In documents it is written that Rwanda will support vulnerable groups, including Historically Marginalized People, so that we will be 0% in 2020, but really we don’t see that.”⁴⁰ This implies that because the government has failed to specifically target the Batwa community beyond covering school fees, the Batwa remain in their uniquely impoverished situation.

The government programming that Batwa have received is generalized for all Rwandans and fails to tailor any programs to the specificities of Batwa culture. One issue the government fails to address is the unemployment of university-educated Batwa. Once the Batwa benefit from their government-sponsored university education, they return home, unable to secure gainful employment. Angélique and Shaban suggested that the Batwa are in need of positive discrimination policies that would help them to make the connections necessary to gain

⁴⁰ Ibid.

employment.⁴¹ In addition, the Batwa also have issues of land and property. Many live in low-quality, unstable houses located in ubudugudus without access to electricity or a clean water source. These issues remain unaddressed. Further, hunger and malnutrition plagues much of the rural Batwa. Currently, 68% of Batwa households only eat one meal a day.⁴² Furthermore, as Kalimba Zephrin discussed, some members of the Batwa community harbor desires to return to the forest, differentiating their mindset from that of other Rwandans who practice agriculture or pastoralism. Thus, by failing to address these unique issues, the Batwa community has failed to make significant progress.

Further, not only do these projects fail to consider the unique needs of the Batwa community, but they also ignore the culture of the Batwa. Interviewee A elaborated on this, saying, “If they [the government] would consult us, they would know that the Batwa wouldn’t prefer one cow per family...If they were to consult us, we would say please, gather us and give us training about how to modernize traditional pots.”⁴³ Yet, instead the Rwandan government treats the Batwa as homogenous to all other Rwandans, despite their unique culture. If the Rwandan government truly wants to realize its Vision 2020 goals, it must address the uniqueness of the Batwa community, because currently, by lumping the Batwa into pre-existing programs, their situation is unchanging.

Political Representation and Participation

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² COPORWA report

⁴³ Ibid.

Another issue facing the Batwa community is their lack of participation in Rwandan politics. A survey COPORWA conducted found that 99% of Batwa do not participate in decision making.⁴⁴ Throughout my research it became clear that the Batwa have little say in how Rwanda, or even their communities, is governed.

Throughout all of Rwanda the only political representative is Kalimba Zephrin in the Senate. This becomes alarming in the context of Rwanda's decentralized politics. Many decisions that impact the daily lives of citizens are made at the district, cell or ubudugudu level, before trickling down. Interviewee A expressed their concern over this, saying "We only have 1 person in the whole country, in all the districts, the 416 sectors, with 2,016 cells, with 14,000 villages—all we have is 1."⁴⁵ This raises the question of what ability the Batwa have to influence how the government operates or what programs exist for them. Interviewee B echoed this, adding that it is impossible for just one man to represent the whole Twa community.⁴⁶ Angélique and Shaban concurred that one wasn't enough and cited how the Burundian Batwa, who have better representation, are "more taken care of."⁴⁷ Thus, the Batwa are grossly underrepresented, a situation that contributes to their ongoing marginalization.

⁴⁴ COPORWA report

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Interview with Interviewee B

⁴⁷ Ibid.

One reason underlying the lack of political participation is the lack of education within the Batwa community. As Kalimba Zephirin put it, “Comment peut-on participer dans les politiques sans l’éducation?” [How can we participate in politics without education?]⁴⁸ Many of the Batwa, especially the older generation, are illiterate or don’t have a high enough level of education to formally lead. Additionally, without education it can difficult to develop the critical thinking skills necessary for challenging the governmental status quo. Further, it appears that many Batwa are not well-informed regarding Rwandan politics. While in the field I witnessed the COPORWA representative sensitize the various ubudugudus on various government and COPORWA programs. The need for continual sensitization suggests that the community is unaware of what is occurring, and therefore, unable to fully participate in Rwandan politics.

Thus, when considering the lack of representation and ways in which Batwa participate in politics, it becomes evident that in Rwanda, the Twa are inhibited from fully participating in in Rwandan politics in the same rate and with the same influence as other Rwandans.

Ndi Umunyarwanda

Ndi Umunyarwanda, the one Rwanda campaign, has influenced the integration of the Batwa into Rwandan society. All Twa in Rwanda are now seen as Rwandan, rather than as Batwa. This program has changed how Batwa are viewed in Rwandan society, allowing them to move freely and live among other Rwandans.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Prior to 1994 and “Ndi Umunyarwanda” the Batwa suffered from severe stereotyping and discrimination. Some interviewees referenced this, such as Kalimba Zephrin, remembering when they were called “les singes et les animaux” [monkeys and animals]⁴⁹ or Angélique’s anecdote of having to drink separate pots of banana beer at weddings. Now, however, thanks to “Ndi Umunyarwanda” and other similar government policies “Twa can go anywhere or do anything. They are just Rwandans.”⁵⁰ This change has greatly improved the mobility of the Twa and their ability to access education.

However, I encountered some misunderstandings regarding Ndi Umunyarwanda among the Batwa community. Some interviewees suggested that the Batwa are not included in “Ndi Umunyarwanda” because it is “an issue of genocide.”⁵¹ This misunderstanding is interesting because one, it implies that the Batwa were uninvolved in the genocide, when in reality they were both perpetrators and victims, and second, it shows that many do not fully understand the program. Thus, the full benefits of Ndi Umunyarwanda may not be fully realized for the Batwa community.

However, one downside of the program that was mentioned is that if there is one Rwandan identity, the Batwa are not considered indigenous. Rwanda does not recognize the Batwa as indigenous; whereas, Burundi does. Some interviews expressed discontent over not being

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Interview with Angélique and Shaban

⁵¹ Interview with Interviewee A

considered the first inhabitants of Rwanda, with one participant saying “If you raise issues by saying they [the Batwa] are indigenous they tell you no...if you raise issues by Batwa you are bringing ethnicity.”⁵² Thus, to some, Ndi Umunyarwanda makes it more difficult to be a Rwanda Batwa because they cannot benefit from protections internationally guaranteed to indigenous groups.

Thus, although Ndi Umunyarwanda has begun to help integrate the Batwa community, it has not been fully effective within the Batwa community. Thus, although a positive step towards integration, it has not been fully effective.

Conclusion

When examining the current socio-economic and political situation of the Batwa it becomes clear that although the Rwandan government has begun to integrate the Batwa, they remain economically and politically distinct from other Rwandans. This suggests that ultimately, the Batwa have not been successfully incorporated into modern Rwandan society. Although the Batwa may have been able to benefit collaterally from Vision 2020, VUP, girinika and other poverty alleviation programs, these programs are not enough. They have access on paper, but in reality poverty hinders them from fully accessing programs that are tailored towards farmers, pastoralists and those with land. This raises the issue of what the government is more committed to Vision 2020 and eliminating extreme poverty or creating one unified identity? If

⁵² Interview with Interviewee A

the government prioritizes unity, then the Batwa will not be addressed uniquely, remaining in extreme poverty.

Further, this research also points to the differences between living in Kigali and living in rural areas of Rwanda. This divide shows that development programs are more easily accessed in Kigali, where development is rapid and aid abounds. However, in rural areas development is not occurring as swiftly. This divide separates not only rural Batwa, but all rural Rwandans from their urban counterparts because their standards of living differ. Thus, in order to achieve Vision 2020, not only for the Batwa, but all Rwandans, the government must consider the ways in which many rural people fail to benefit from development.

Moreover, the persistent inequalities faced by the Batwa community may serve as a barrier to unity and reconciliation. Because the Batwa remain ostracized they not have the same access to many programs. This might lead to resentment and could cause the Batwa to act as a spoiler to the Ndi Umunyarwanda identity, if they do not feel equal to all other Rwandans. Thus, if the Rwandan government aims to create a unified identity, the Batwa must be living among other Rwandans at the same level, not drastically behind.

Furthermore, the Batwa serve as an interesting exception to the idea of “one Rwanda” because they simultaneously consider themselves a unique group and Rwandan. This calls into question the complete erasure of ethnicity from the public sphere, particularly in the case of Rwanda’s indigenous peoples. Can they be recognized as indigenous and have their rights protected and

still be considered equally Rwandan? Is being Rwandan limited to a history of agriculture and pastoralism? All these are questions that the Rwandan government must grapple with before it will be able to politically and economically include the Batwa completely in Rwandan life.

Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. How has the Rwandan government helped the Batwa community since 1994?
 - a. Are there any specific programs or services initiated by the government to address the needs of Twas? What are these programs? How successful have they been?
2. What are your opinions on Vision 2020? Do you think it addresses the special needs of the Twa community?
3. How have Vision 2020 Umurenge and programs such as Girinka and Ubudehe served the Batwa community?
4. Do you think that Rwandan education policy and access to universal education includes the Twa?
 - a. Do schools fees or the cost of uniforms and school supplies form a barrier?
 - b. Do Twa have equal access to secondary and university education?
5. What is the their main way of survival for the Twa? To what extent do Twa have access to land and agricultural livelihoods?
6. Do Twa have the same access to government as other Rwandans?
7. In what ways do Twa participate in Rwandan politics?
8. How do you feel about the political representation of the Twa? Does the Twa community benefit from that representation?
9. Do you feel as though the Batwa of Burundi benefit more from government programming because of their mandated political representation?

10. Do you feel as though the Rwandan Batwa face stereotyping and discrimination? If so, how does this influence the Batwa?
11. How has the Ndi Umunyarwanda campaign influenced the Twa community?
 - a. Has this influenced access to services or specialized programming by NGOs and other development partners?
12. What could the Rwandan government do to better address the needs of the Twa community?

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